

SHORT STORIES

№ 767 ♣ WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 12th 1903 ♣ PRICE ONE PENNY



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PUNCTURE



THE COURAGE OF DEBORAH.

Containing the incident depicted on the cover.

"DEBORAH! DEBORAH!" Everard Stanhope glanced anxiously up the white road, winding like a ribbon among the green hill sides. The sun fell full upon his face, kindly and pleasant, though the blue eyes wore a startled look and the sensitive lips twitched in nervous apprehension.

At first sight Everard Stanhope appeared to be an old man. His figure was bent, his steps uncertain, his manner deprecating; but when he spoke, the voice, singularly clear and penetrating, surprised one. As a matter of fact the man was forty-five, though he looked well over sixty!

For a while he scanned the road to left and right, watching with eager eyes for the figure of his daughter. The clatter of horses' hoofs, the sound of the girl's laugh, the deep tones of a man's voice—Deborah Stanhope came riding down the hill with Harold Earnshaw.

Tall, well-built, with long, lithe limbs and the easy carriage that tells of perfect health, the dark beauty of her face was in marked contrast to the good-looking, fair-haired man beside her.

That Earnshaw admired her it was plain to all. The young Squire's infatuation for his agent's daughter was indeed a matter of village gossip. As to Deborah, it was not so easy to discover the nature of her feelings. She was a high-spirited girl, and up to the present had kept Harold at arm's length.

"You're late," said Stanhope, as they drew up at the garden gate. "I expected you a good hour ago."

"It's my fault, Mr. Stanhope," interposed young Earnshaw. "I persuaded your daughter to look round the orchid houses at the Hall. It took longer than we expected," he added, flushing.

"It's very good of you to take such trouble about Deborah," answered Stanhope. There was a suggestion of restraint in the tone that made young Earnshaw flush. He had hoped for an invitation to spend the remainder of the evening with his agent; he had a sincere liking for the man, and had tried more than once to break down the barrier of reserve that Stanhope set between them. To-night this reserve was very much in evidence. Earnshaw responded to its influence and rode back to the Hall.

"Deb," the man caught her by the arm, "Deb, I've something to say to you. No, not in the garden, someone will overhear us. Come inside." He hurried her into the house, locked the door of the sitting-room, barred the window, and in a low voice commenced to speak.

"We shall have to leave here," he said. "I—I've seen that man again. Don't tell me I'm mistaken, or call it the

fancy of a distorted brain. I saw him, more, I've spoken to him. He says he will tell the world know who and what I am, that he will tell the Squire, deprive me of my place, shatter my peace, destroy my last chance of earning a livelihood. He says——"

With a passionate gesture she interrupted him.

"Let him tell his tale," she cried, "let him do his worst. We can defy him. Be guided by me, father, put your fears of this man from you. See Mr. Earnshaw yourself, tell him your history. He will have nothing but pity and commiseration for you."

"Pity?" said the old man with a gasp. "You forget. What pity did the people show me the last time? Deborah, I cannot bear it. I see again in fancy the mob with angry voices, cruel faces—the mob that chased me to my very doors. I tell you it will kill me if my history is dragged to light. I have striven again and yet again to make a fresh start. And always Fate has been against me. Since we came here, three years ago, for the first time it seemed as if I could escape the past. And now, now—he has traced me—and there is no hope, we must go at once, to-night, leave the place for ever."

"Father, dear father, will you not listen to me? Stay here and face it out!"

"I cannot, it would kill me. You hear me, Deborah, it would kill me—as it killed your mother. If my story were made known, not a man, woman, or child but would turn against me. They would mock at me, revile me, threaten me. I tell you it will kill me to stay here."

His voice rose to a cry, his face twitched convulsively, his eyes, wide with terror, glanced towards the door.

"Save me, save me!" he shrieked. "Deborah, they have done for me."

"Dearest, there is no one here but Deb. Father, I beg of you, take courage." Her arms about him, her fresh face raised to his, she strove with tender, loving words to soothe him.

"We will leave to-night if you wish it, dear," she added with a sigh; "but perhaps there is some other way out of the difficulty. Could Martin Heriot's silence be bought?"

"Only in one way, Deb. The way I told you of three years ago. If you marry him he will persecute me no longer. As his wife——"

With a cry the girl broke from him.

"Never," she said passionately. "I can never be his wife. The thought of him fills me with loathing. His face, his hands, his voice—I cannot do it, father, even for you."

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"Then we must leave," he answered wearily, glancing round the room with a look of pathos in his eyes that filled the girl with self-reproach.

"What can I do?" she cried. "If it were any other way but that!"

Her father sighed, and turned to leave the room, but as he reached the door a sudden faintness seemed to seize him.

"I am choking," he stammered. "I cannot breathe. I I——" With a cry of pain he threw up his arms and, staggering, fell to the ground.

That night, on which he had planned to leave the village, found him stretched on a bed of pain, raving in delirium.

The good people of the village of Helstone, though curious concerning them, were kindly disposed towards the agent and his daughter. Offers of assistance in the task of nursing the invalid came from all quarters, everyone seemed desirous of helping the young girl on whom so great a strain had fallen.

Deborah, however, refused all aid. She, and she alone, was with her father in his hours of delirium, listening to his fears, the outcome of a terrible passage in his past life. Harold Earnshaw called daily at the cottage with fruit and flowers, and his kindly solicitude for her father, his tender care for herself, were the only bright things in the girl's life.

If only she could tell him the whole sad history of her father's past! She could trust him, no one could look in his clear blue eyes and not feel convinced as to that. And yet—— She glanced towards the bed where her father lay unconscious.

"No one must know," he muttered over and over again, "no one must ever know!"

With a sigh Deb put away the thought of taking Harold into her confidence. She must bear her burden alone; no one could help her. Of the man, Martin Heriot, she had seen nothing. Village gossip told her that he was stopping at the inn, and seemed concerned at the agent's illness. Deb understood his silence. He was waiting on events. If her father rallied, he would again bring pressure to bear upon her. He would threaten to expose the old man unless she became his wife.

If poor Stanhope died—Deb's thoughts stopped short at this point. She could not imagine a future without her father.

For six weeks Deborah fought unceasingly for her father's life. At the end of that time there came a change for the better. His strength increased rapidly, but though his bodily health improved his intellect remained impaired. He seemed to have lost all consciousness of past events and lived only in the present. He was to all intents and purposes a child, and like a child had to be cared for and looked after.

One evening, worn out with anxiety and fatigue, the girl snatched a respite from the sick room. Her father was sleeping peacefully, the scent of the roses from the cottage garden stole through the open window, the moon, touching the trees to silver, shed a soft light on the woods and meadows.

Deborah felt a sudden longing for the roses and the summer night. She hurried down the garden path and, leaning upon the gate, glanced swiftly up the white road. The next minute a tall figure stepped from the shadow of the trees, the gate was pushed back by an eager hand, and Deborah found herself clasped by two strong arms.

"Sweetheart, I've been watching the house for hours, hoping and praying that you might come into the garden. These past six weeks seem an eternity. It is years and years since I saw you, Deborah——" He clasped her closer, and raising her face to his, took toll from the fresh, sweet lips.

"You shouldn't, Harold, you have no right, you——" He interrupted her objections with a laugh.

"It's not my fault, Deb. Over and over again I've tried to tell you how dear you are to me, and always you've put me off. How many times it has been upon my lips to ask you to be my wife! As I commenced to speak you froze me into silence. To-night I felt the time had come when I must assert myself. It was no use to parley, the citadel had to be carried by force of arms. And now——" he drew her tenderly towards him—"now you can't refuse to hear me. Deb, my sweet Deb, will you take me for better or for worse?"

His eyes, brave and true, looked into hers. She loved him with all the force of a strong nature. Why should she put this happiness from her? Why should her father's sad fate spoil hers?

"Dearest, you must not refuse me. Your father is likely to be ailing for some time. He will want great care, care such as you alone cannot give him. I must help you, Deb—as your husband it will be my right to help you."

For a moment the girl hesitated. If she accepted Earnshaw's proposal she would gain happiness for herself, comfort for her father. If she refused, there was nothing but a future of hard work, a long and painful effort to earn a pittance sufficient to keep herself and the old man who could work no longer. Why should she put happiness from her, why should she refuse the gift of love? And yet ought she to marry any man while the shadow of her father's secret overcast her life? Dare she join her future to another's, her future that must inevitably be darkened by the past?

If she could tell her lover the truth he might find a way out of the difficulty. For a moment the temptation was almost too strong. Harold would not turn against her or her father. He would help and encourage them. But the recollection of the old man's cry "No one must know!" stayed the words upon her lips.

"I cannot marry you," she cried. "I can never marry you."

"You care for me; you love me? Deborah, you shall not say you do not love me."

With a sob she turned towards him, clasping her arms about his neck she drew his face close to her own, and kissed him passionately upon the lips.

"For the last time," she whispered; "darling, for the last time!" and left him in the stillness of the summer night—alone.

Martin Heriot, pacing with restless strides a clearing in a thick plantation of young firs, was obviously ill at ease. A tall, broad-shouldered man with a heavy brown moustache and strongly marked features, he impressed most people with a belief in his honesty of purpose; that he was a good-hearted fellow was the general opinion concerning him, an opinion he did his best to foster.

He had come to Helstone with the fixed determination of making Deborah his wife. It had needed time and considerable ingenuity to find Stanhope and his daughter, and now that he had found them he did not mean they should escape him.

Chance had revealed to him certain incidents in Stanhope's life, curiosity had led him to follow up the clues until he learnt the secret of the man's life. Armed with this knowledge he had pressed his suit on Deborah. On her refusal to entertain his proposals he had sworn to ruin both her and her father.

Their flight some three years back had upset his plans for the time being, but the game had seemed to be in his hands at Helstone. Stanhope was older, weaker, less able to withstand him. A turn of the screw and the girl would yield. His victim's illness had thrown out his calculations. Stanhope was not in a condition to understand the significance of threats. There still remained Deborah, however; Deborah whom gossip declared to be in love with the young Squire.

To and fro, to and fro, Martin Heriot paced. In his own fashion he loved the girl, not a fibre of his body but thrilled at the thought of her. The recollection of her proud face with its flashing eyes sent the blood to his head.

"I'll win her if I die for it," he muttered.

The sound of a horse's gallop in the distance made him prick up his ears. Deborah on her bright bay mare—a gift from Earnshaw—was coming down the road. Between the coppice and the highway lay a stretch of meadow land through which a stream meandered, fringed with rushes. Crossing the foot-bridge, Heriot hurried to the highway. Deborah, recognising him, urged the horse to a quicker pace.

"Not so fast, Miss Stanhope," said the man grimly, seizing the bridle of the mare, "I've waited here an hour or more on the chance of seeing you. You've got to listen to me."

There was that in Heriot's face that showed the girl he meant to enforce his will. She dismounted and followed him to the meadow, leading her mare by the rein.

"Three years ago I asked you to be my wife," he said slowly. "To-day I ask you the same question."

"And I unhesitatingly refuse. I will never marry you!"

His face whitened, his thin lips grew compressed.

"Think what it will mean," he answered slowly. "Your father disgraced, your home broken up, your livelihood gone."

"My father is beyond your power to hurt him any more. Your persecution has done its work. His mind is dead; he has no recollection of that terrible time when he suffered so cruelly, so unjustly."

"Unjustly!" the man sneered. "Your father was tried for murder."

"And found innocent," she interrupted. "Even you cannot deny that."

"One among twelve jurymen denied his guilt, and persuaded the other eleven to give in to his opinion. The public thought very differently indeed."

"There is no one left for you to persecute," she said; "a thing like you cannot hurt me!"

"I do not wish to hurt you. I love you—love you as only a strong man can. I want you for my own, to shield you from all care, all harm. Deborah," he stretched out his arms, "believe me—I love you."

"I cannot be your wife," she answered steadily. "If you truly love me, you will leave me and my father in peace."

"Never. I will not rest until I have you. I will follow you from place to place, drive you from every spot, turn you adrift upon the world. Not a man, not a woman but shall shrink from you—a murderer's daughter! Do you think your lover will hunger for your kisses when he learns the truth? Do you think Harold Earnshaw will marry the child of—"

"You shall not say it!" she cried fiercely. "Father is innocent—innocent!"

"And the blood upon his hands, the old man's screams for help. Are they proofs of innocence?"

"My father found the old man dying—stabbed to the heart. He tried to raise him from the floor, and when he fell back dead, called for assistance. You know the story well."

"Aye, and Harold Earnshaw shall know it also. You have refused to marry him, but in your heart you mean one day to give in. His love you shall lose. To-night he shall learn who you are. There's not a man in all the world would marry you but me—would marry a murderer's daughter."

His eyes burnt into hers, his hands, shaking with passion, clasped her own.

She knew it was the truth! If Harold learnt the story of the past, if this man told him her father was a murderer, he would put her from his heart. A cry broke from her lips.

"There is no happiness for you except with me. You have no future save what I offer. I have you at my mercy. Deborah—my love."

As he spoke he flung his arm round her waist. At his touch the girl's hot blood flamed into fury. With a sudden strength she threw him off, and raising her riding whip struck him across the face.

The suddenness of the attack, the strength of the blow, sent him staggering back. His foot slipped on the wet grass and he fell reeling to the ground on the water's brink.

The stream was behind him. With lifted arm Deborah stood in front; her face blazing with wrath, her figure drawn up to its full height.

"At your mercy am I?" she said in a clear, ringing voice. "Tell me that again!" And the whip trembled in the air.

"To-night I shall tell Earnshaw," he cried foaming.

But Earnshaw, a grim look of satisfaction in his eyes, was standing beside Deborah!

Heriot's power was broken, his career of persecution at an end.

Before night fell the village was agog with the intelligence that Mr. Earnshaw's agent had been tried for murder! The information, strangely enough, appeared to arouse sympathy



"Save me, save me!" he shrieked. "Deborah, they have done for me!"

instead of condemnation in the hearts of the rustics. Their feelings took a different colour towards their informer, however, and Mr. Heriot was glad to quit the neighbourhood with no very serious injury.

Deborah, however, felt the kindly wishes of the neighbours almost as keenly as their suspicions, and deliberated the possibility of flying from Helstone and Harold. The latter, however, nipped any such project in the bud.

"There's no argument about it, Deb," he said. "I'm going to marry you whether you like it or not." And Deborah, glad to have the question settled for her, submitted.

"If only father's innocence were proved," she sighed, "How happy I should be."

Fate, however, who had treated Stanhope so badly, did him a kindness at the last. On his daughter's wedding eve there came the news that a certain convict had confessed to the murder for which the innocent man had been tried.

"If it had come too late, my darling," murmured Harold. "If you had let Heriot frighten you into marriage, and put me from your life. Deb, my brave-hearted Deb, I can never love you enough for your courage."

She nestled closer, clasping her arms about his neck. "It wasn't really brave," she whispered. "I should have been terribly frightened—but for my love of you!"

John K. Prothero,



A Terrible Doubt

And the Result of It.

"It is a first night at St. James' Theatre," observed Mrs. Gregory Farquhar.

She was sitting at the dinner-table opposite her husband, Captain Farquhar, of the Guards.

"Aw!" replied that gentleman, being evidently unable to think of any more trenchant remark.

Mrs. Farquhar went on, with a slight nervousness of manner:

"Lord Ferdie has sent me a box—you'll come, won't you, Gregory?"

"Awfully sorry," answered Gregory, indulging in all the accepted abbreviations with which our gilded youth disfigures his native tongue, "but really couldn't. Got an engagement to-night, Bessie—must keep it, 'pon my honour. Be delighted to go with you otherwise."

"Oh, I daresay!" said Mrs. Farquhar, with an angry colour rising in her cheeks—"delighted, of course! I've observed that you always would be delighted to go out with me on Saturday evening, only you're engaged."

Captain Farquhar applied himself to the claret, and made no answer. He was not blind to that angry colour rising in his pretty wife's face; and being a young man of a peaceful disposition, notwithstanding that his profession was that of war, he took refuge in a wise silence.

It is not to be denied that silence was a very easy thing to him, for as a rule he had nothing whatever to say. His claims to the admiration of Society consisted in the superb proportions of his form, the magnificence of his moustache, and the perfect fit of his clothes.

Mrs. Farquhar, on the contrary, had a tongue of her own; and just now she seemed inclined to use it.

"Am I to go alone with Lord Ferdie?" she asked presently.

"'Pon my soul, Bess, I don't know. He's a harmless chap enough; but I suppose it wouldn't look well."

"A harmless chap!" echoed Mrs. Farquhar, in such a tone that the captain opened his eyes wider than usual.

"You want some sort of a sheep-dog, I s'pose, Bess?" he added thoughtfully.

"Yes," said Mrs. Farquhar with intense scorn; "quite in the watch-dog style that would be. But it might be a little difficult to engage one for Saturday nights only—that little difficulty didn't occur to you, perhaps?" Gregory, she said, with a sudden change of voice and manners, "I will know where you go on Saturday nights!"

"Oh, come, I say!" was Captain Farquhar's response.

He was a good deal taken aback by this pretty little creature's sudden transformation into a virago.

"You must tell me!" she cried.

"Very sorry," answered the Captain; "can't!"

Mrs. Farquhar looked at him from under her long, dark eyelashes; and then, by a great effort controlled herself, and did a little acting.

"Gregory dear," she said, very gently, "do tell me. It's disgraceful to be such a jealous little wretch, I know; but I can't help it."

"Forgotten the compact, oh, Bess?—each to do as we pleased, don't you know, and no unreasonable jealousy allowed."

"Oh;—but we weren't to have secrets, and mine isn't unreasonable jealousy. No woman could endure such a thing—flesh and blood couldn't stand it. Dear Gregory, do tell me, and then I'll be—oh, so good!"

"Very sorry," repeated the captain—"can't!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Farquhar, transformed again, as by magic, into the virago; "then I know what to think. I'm not the ignorant little thing I was when you married me. It comes to 'You go your way and I go mine'—"

does it? Very well! You used to think me pretty; now, I suppose, you have found a different style of beauty that you like better. Never mind! I can still manage to be the fashion for a season or two, if I choose. You think Lord Ferdie a harmless sort of chap, do you? He's very kind; he seems to admire me very much. I'll send over for Mrs. Vane; no doubt she will go with me and play sheep-dog to-night."

"No, no!" exclaimed the captain; "don't go out with that dreadful woman, Bess."

"Who else am I to get at a moment's notice? Am I to sit at home by myself all the evening, just because it happens to be the night you are engaged? That would scarcely be keeping our compact. Ta-ta! I'm going to dress. I hope you'll enjoy yourself."

"I say, Bess," said the Captain, rising from his chair as his wife turned to the door.

"Well?"

"Don't go with Mrs. Vane and Ferdie."

"Tell me where you are going, Gregory, and I—well, I'll try and get somebody else."

The captain opened his mouth as if to speak, then shut it again.

He looked at his wife in a hesitating sort of way, grew a trifle redder than usual, and at last relapsed into the old formula: "Very sorry—can't!"

Mrs. Farquhar made him a profound courtesy, and then left the room.

She went upstairs to her dressing-room and rang the bell. When her maid came, the door was locked and she was told to go away again. For Mrs. Farquhar, to her own surprise, had burst into a passion of weeping.

After a few minutes this stopped as suddenly as it began. She rose hurriedly, opened her door, and set it ajar. Then she quietly and quickly got a long dark travelling-cloak and wrapped it round her, put a little black hat on her head, and tied a thick veil over her face. She snatched up her purse and gloves, and then went outside her door and stood listening.

In a little while she heard the captain come out into the hall, take his hat, and open the front door.

Swiftly and softly she crept down the stairs. As he closed the front door she reached it, and, after waiting a moment, opened it very gently, went out, and as gently closed it behind her.

She had made up her mind to follow him.

The Farquhars lived in Hyde Park Terrace; there was a cab-stand within a stone's throw of their house.

Lingering within the shelter of the railings, Mrs. Farquhar watched her husband take a hansom and drive off in it. Then she rushed across to the stand, sprang into another, and said to the man:

"Keep that hansom that has just driven away in sight. Stop when it stops, but not too close." The man whipped up his horse, and in another minute they were in full chase.

It was a desperate move, this of pretty Mrs. Farquhar's; and though her spirit was still all ablaze, and her face white with resolution, her heart quailed within her. How would it end? What would she learn to-night?

Strange as it may seem, Bess Farquhar cared not one farthing for any man in the world but her own handsome guardsman; and though she pretended to have the fashionable failing of a love of admiration, she was perfectly indifferent to the worship of all the gay chappies of the day, if the especial one of her heart had indeed grown tired of her.

She felt sure he had. She only wanted to have facts, instead of feelings, to go upon; and then, she resolved, she would throw aside her lingering scruples, and drown her regrets for the past in the excitements of the present. She was making a good beginning certainly in her programme of dissipation.

Her mind was a perfect blank to the fact that Lord Ferdie would expect her to be in that box at the St. James' Theatre to-night.

Very certainly she would not be there; for it was now nearly the time of the performance, and she was speeding away Citywards along the Bayswater Road, along Oxford Street—on—on.

"How much further?" she thought to herself, with a rather frightened feeling.

To tell the truth, she had expected to be taken north, to the charming precincts of St. John's Wood.

It was a clear, fine night, and she kept her eyes steadily fixed upon the hansom in front of her, which she could see very plainly. It went on, on, at a steady pace, much as though the driver had made up his mind to drive all night, and meant to keep his horse cool for the work.

And as they went on, it really seemed to Bess Farquhar as if this were the fact.

They got into Holborn, on a straight line, over the Viaduct, down Newgate Street into Cheapside. Then came Cornhill and Leadenhall Street; and then Mrs. Farquhar began to find she was more frightened than anything else.

How deserted it looked! this place that she had seen on her former visits swarming with men of business, who one and all recognised her as an outsider, and stared at her as she was never stared at in Piccadilly or the Park.

Now the only people about were the actual dwellers in the City, intent on their Saturday night's marketings; the only vehicles, great drays and carts that were still at work.

Now they were in Aldgate; with wide eyes of wonder Mrs. Farquhar looked at the street so full of a life so strange to her. Soon afterwards she saw written on the wall Whitechapel Road. Her heart sank within her. Where could Gregory be going? Was he a Fenian coming to some secret meeting to discuss the interesting subject of dynamite?

Like an arrow they had come straight and direct—along, as it seemed, one broad, smooth road—from Hyde Park to Whitechapel, right through the heart of the City.

Yet on went that hansom in front, straight down Whitechapel Road, that great thoroughfare which might, if fashion, instead of famine, were at home there, be one of the handsomest streets in London. But it looked a very dreary, hopeless, sordid place now.

Oh, what could Gregory want here? Or, on went that hansom straight away up the Mile End Road.

Mrs. Farquhar had heard of Whitechapel as a place the mere mention of which must make one shudder; but she had not even heard of Mile End.

The cab stopped at last—at Canal Road. Mrs. Farquhar felt quite worn out, the drive had been so long and so strange.

Her cabman, wise in his generation, drew up on the other side of the street. He accepted five shillings with an attempt at a growl; but Mrs. Farquhar did not stay to listen, for she saw that the captain was walking very swiftly down Canal Road, and she was afraid of missing him.

He turned twice, down dark and dreary streets, that filled Mrs. Farquhar with a nervous dread; then at last he stopped at a dismal little house, in a dismal little street, rang a bell, and was immediately admitted.

Mrs. Farquhar stood trembling against the railings; she knew not what to do. Presently a crowd of roughs came down the street, rang the same bell, and were admitted. Then came a number of dirty, miserable women. They too went to the door.

Despair gave Mrs. Farquhar courage. She was as much afraid to stay out in this dreadful street as to go into this mysterious place. She went in among the women, and when the door was opened, entered with them.

To her amazement she found herself in a very large room. Four houses had been thrown into one, and this room ran all the length. It was crowded with people—such people as Mrs. Farquhar had never dreamt of; the sight of their poverty, their rags, their strange faces—some fierce, some foolish, some utterly sad—made her feel sick.

Presently there rang out a clear, fine tenor voice; it was her husband's. He was singing an old Scottish ballad, with which of old he had been wont to please his college chums over gay suppers. How these poor wretches listened!

Mrs. Farquhar wondered as she looked furtively about her. And she felt a strange sensation of pride when she saw at the end of the song, that her handsome guardian was a popular favourite—a darling—among these unhappy and unwashed ones.

He was intreated for another song; the audience was familiar with his whole repertoire, and would gladly have had it all. Again and again Captain Farquhar sang; and then, with a good-humoured laugh, he refused to sing any more, and gave up the piano to a quiet-looking lady, dressed like a Sister of Mercy, who began to play some pretty dance-music.

Captain Farquhar went into another part of the hall, where there was a billiard-table. Here he was welcomed with great delight by a crowd of horrible-looking roughs, who were knocking the balls about.

A game began in good earnest. Captain Farquhar was a splendid player, and the men watched him with fascinated eyes when he was at work.

Presently Mrs. Farquhar noticed that a stalwart and very pleasant-looking young clergyman had joined this group, and saw that the men seemed to be as fond of him as they were of Captain Farquhar. By-and-by the clergyman broke up the meeting with a little speech, and when everyone rose to go out, Mrs. Farquhar slipped away unseen.

Cabs are not plentiful on the Mile End Road; a hansom is as strange a sight there as in the depth of the country. So when Captain Farquhar reached the top of Canal Road he stopped an omnibus which was going Citywards. But just as he was going to get into it his arm was touched. He looked and saw a young woman; without further ceremony he put his foot on the omnibus step, when the young woman said:

"Gregory!"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Captain Farquhar.

Then he signed to the omnibus conductor to go on.

Captain and Mrs. Farquhar then took a walk down Mile End Road, and this is some of what they said:

"Will you ever forgive me, Gregory? How could I be such a jealous little wretch, and so mean as to spy?"

"All right," said the good-natured Captain; "women can't help it, I suppose."

"And why wouldn't you tell me?"

"Didn't want to be laughed at."

"Oh, I wouldn't laugh at you—I'd like to tell all London!"

"Exactly—and then all London would laugh at me. Couldn't stand that. Don't tell, Bess; should cut altogether if any of the chaps found me out."

"I won't tell, then. But how did you find such a place?"

"The parson there's an old school chum of mine. I read the papers, and wondered if the writing fellows told lies; so wrote and asked Dolly, as we always used to call him. Dolly said: 'Come and see'; he was in the midst of it, trying to humanise the wretches. Dolly got hold of me when I did come down, and made me promise to do some humanising. Don't know that it's much use, but they seem to like it. Wish they didn't look so hungry. I'm going to give 'em a supper next week."

"You are! Oh, Gregory! I must come and help."

And she did. More than that; she kept her husband's secret. For he declared positively that he would go immediately to Timbuctoo if any of "the fellows" heard of it.

Maisie Meadows.

Powerful New Series.

THE "BRIDGE" OF RUIN.

Being the
CONFESSIONS OF A GIRL GAMBLER.

Dramatis Personæ.

OLIVE BERESFORD, the writer of these confessions. She is a young lady who is lured into gambling by her friend, Annabel Vernon, whom she detects cheating. Miss Beresford arranges a secret

code of signals with a Mr. Tasker, in order to beat Annabel Vernon at her own game."

HARRY VERNON, of Vernon Towers, who with his wife plans to catch Olive in a trap. He manages to secure photographs of the incriminating gestures passed between Mr. Tasker and the relater of these episodes.

ANNABEL VERNON, wife of the last-named. An old school friend of Miss Beresford's. Her husband having obtained the proofs of Olive's alleged cheating, she holds the photos over her victim as a threat, declaring that, unless Miss Beresford does as she is ordered, she will be denounced as a card-sharper. She makes the unfortunate girl a tool to win money from her guests.

MR. TASKER, who poses as a gentleman of means, but who is really a despicable bounder. He endeavours to force Miss Beresford to marry him.

MR. MAURICE RAY, a gentleman who rescues the narrator from a mad dog, and who since takes a kindly interest in the welfare of the young girl, treating her with great respect, and showing her much consideration.

MR. DEAN FISHER, a "Bridge" expert, and one of the guests of the Vernons at Vernon Towers when Olive Beresford was fleeced.

MRS. GRAINGER, a rich widow and an ardent gambler, another of the guests at the Towers.

MR. HAROLD BAINBRIG, a wealthy bachelor, who with his sister,

MISS EDITH BAINBRIG, loses heavily at "Bridge" whilst playing with the Vernons and the unwilling Olive Beresford.

EPISODE XIII. Accused of Theft.

"A THIEF! I am no thief! This is an infamous plot!"

Such was my passionate exclamation, and I looked eagerly round to see how far my words were likely to be believed, but not a single face held out the slightest hope for me. The Vernons looked indignant at my presumable ingratitude. The Bainbrigs averted their gaze. And the policeman was stolidly important.

"An infamous plot!" repeated Harry Vernon. "Pray who is likely to have plotted against you? Have we not done our best to provide pleasure and entertainment for you? And is it at all credible that we would bring a serious accusation against a person whom we invited to our house as a guest?"

"And it's no use your pretending to be innocent," was Annabel's coarse remark. "We've missed things ever since you came, but we should never have dreamt of suspecting

you if we had not watched you come out of Harry's den in the middle of the night, hours after you were supposed to have gone to bed. When we discovered that a silver paper weight I showed you in the den only yesterday had been taken out of that room, we guessed at once what you had been doing there when we saw you. And that is why we sent for a policeman."

There was such a dreadful mixture of truth with the lies which Annabel poured out so glibly, that I turned crimson with fright, and my treacherous hostess instantly took advantage of the fact.

"See," she exclaimed, "her own looks betray her! Tell me, Miss Beresford, dare you deny that you went secretly to my husband's private room in the middle of the night?"

"I was there," was my desperate admission. "But you know very well that I stole none of your jewellery, and I am sure you never showed me a paper weight yesterday. Our conversation while I was in that room was about something very different, and I know very well why you are forswearing yourselves now."

"After that," was Mr. Vernon's stern interruption, "I am under the painful necessity of explaining to Mr. and Miss Bainbrig that I was taking you to task for cheating at cards. I did not like to mention this, but you compel me to do so in self-defence."

The wickedness and audacity of these people were so colossal that I was struck almost dumb and sank, trembling and weeping, upon the nearest chair, sobbing vain protestations of innocence the while several more articles which did not belong to me were being taken out of the folds of various garments which I had packed in readiness before I went out.

My heart became as cold as lead, and I saw nothing but ruin before me. For who would believe me if I said that this accusation was brought against me in revenge for rescuing myself from the necessity of cheating at cards for the Vernons? The whole plot was so horribly feasible, and every detail had been thought out so carefully that there was not a loophole of escape left to me. Even my careless refusal of Annabel's hypocritical offer of help over my packing was ingeniously construed into fear of allowing her to see what was contained in my dress basket, and I thought things could not look blacker for me than they did.

But I was mistaken. And even if the Bainbrigs had been faintly inclined to believe my protestations, they soon received addition 1 proof that my accusers were justified in dealing harshly with me.

"Here's just one more thing," said the constable, who had resumed his search. "It's a brooch this time, I think."

"Why, that belongs to me!" cried Miss Bainbrig. "I lost it last night."

It was true. The brooch just produced was one that I had seen Miss Bainbrig wearing. It must have been stolen by Annabel herself, either for the purpose of being eventually turned into money, or to be ready for use in effecting my final ruin.

"Oh, Miss Bainbrig!" I almost shrieked. "I swear to you that I did not put any of the things there! It is a frightful conspiracy intended to prevent anybody from believing me when I say that the Vernons are swindling card sharppers, who invited us here to rob us."

At this apparently wild statement, there was a horrified exclamation from Miss Bainbrig, and her brother bit his lip,

so strong was the restraint he had to put upon himself. He looked very stern and white, but he said not a word which could be interpreted either for me or against me.

The Vernons showed no such moderation.

Anniel lifted her hands in an affectation of horrified surprise.

"Could anybody believe in such awful wickedness!" she exclaimed. "I declare, it makes me ill to think what would have happened next if we had not found this viper out before she had time to do much more mischief! Fancy her having the impudence to talk about cheating! She came here pretending to know nothing about cards. Yet she won everybody's money, and then she has the nerve to accuse other people of sharp practice!"

"Mr. Bainbrig," I implored. "For Heaven's sake, do not condemn me unheard! Things look black against me, I know, because of the frightful completeness of the plot of which I am the victim. But I swear to you that I am innocent."

"I should like to think so, Miss Beresford," was the grave answer. "And I find it difficult to believe all that is said about you. But, if you knew that the money being lost here by guests was not fairly won from us, why did you take a share of it?"

"I could not help myself last night. But I have been to your house this morning, to try and see you. You had gone out, in answer to a telegram, when I arrived, so I left a letter for you, together with all the money that fell to my share last night. I asked you to retain what ought to belong to you, and to give their proportion to the two gentlemen you brought with you last night. I said in my letter that I could not keep the money because I knew it had not been won fairly from you, and you will find when you go home that what I have just said is absolutely true."

"It is a lie!" screamed Anniel, losing all control of herself on realising that she and her husband had been forestalled to some extent. "This girl knew that she would be found out, and concocted a lame tale to lead you off the scent. I expect she was scheming to be asked to your house, so that she could rob you just as she has robbed us. Policeman, do your duty! Take this girl away."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Vernon," was Mr. Bainbrig's firm protest. "A while ago I was reluctantly inclined to believe the mass of evidence adduced against Miss Beresford. But both Mr. Vernon and you have shown so much hatred and spite over this business that I fancy you have overreached yourselves, for you have convinced me that there is something behind all this, which it will be to Miss Beresford's interest to have explained."

"Harold, I agree with you," were the words which put new hope into me, as Edith Bainbrig, with a look of heavenly compassion on her handsome face, came and folded me in her arms. "The whole thing looks too much like a planned out thing to be genuine, and if that letter and its contents are at our house, I shall believe this poor girl to be innocent, in spite of all the evidence which has been so carefully gathered."

"Thank you, Miss Bainbrig," exclaimed another voice, which brought a sudden joyful revulsion of feeling to me. "Thank you. That is just the kind of speech I should have expected you to make. Happily, your judgment is on the right scent. You hope this girl is innocent. I know her to be so. Now then, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon, what mischief have you been up to this time?"

There was a scream of rage from Anniel, and an oath from Harry Vernon, who both gazed at the newcomer as though he had been a spectre.

The Bainbrigs both looked very much relieved, and I—shall I confess it? I made no attempt to free myself when a manly figure took Miss Bainbrig's place; when a manly arm incircled my waist protectively; and when Maurice Ray's sonorous voice said feelingly:

"Don't worry any more about this business, dear. I'll see that the accusations against you are withdrawn, and that your unprincipled accusers eat every word they have said against you."

EPISODE XIV.

The Vernons are Checkmated.

So far I had noticed that several other people had entered the room, but on glancing hastily round, I saw that Mrs. Grainger was almost at my elbow, and that Mr. Dean Fisher, with an ugly gleam in his fishy eyes, was looking at Maurice Ray as if he would have liked to kill him there and then.

"I do not know who you are, sir," he said sneeringly. "But I fancy you don't exactly speak by the card, and as I was a witness of Miss Beresford's clandestine expedition to a room which she knew to be Mr. Vernon's private den, I fancy it will be difficult for you to compel anybody to eat their words."

"I suppose you are Mr. Dean Fisher?" inquired my champion, who showed no signs of being intimidated by the Bridge expert's evident partisanship of the cause of my enemies.

"That is my name," was the answer, given with much more self-possession than was shown after Mr. Ray had remarked: "I fancy I have heard of you before, sir. There was a little scandal at Carlol Castle about two month's ago, and I know of one or two people who would like to meet once more a certain Bridge expert named—"

"What has that got to do with what is going on here?" interrupted Mr. Fisher, so savagely that one had no difficulty in guessing that he was afraid of further disclosures. "Be good enough to confine yourself to the subject at issue."

Mr. Ray smiled contemptuously as he rejoined: "It shall be as you please, Mr. Fisher. I believe you observed just now that you were ready to bear witness against Miss Beresford?"

"Pardon me," was the sullen reply. "I am ready to do nothing of the sort. If Mr. and Mrs. Vernon have any accusations to make against the young lady, they need not count upon me to support them."

"Wise creature! Even a bird of prey knows when he has pursued his game far enough! Ladies and gentlemen, will you all kindly observe that Mr. Fisher knows absolutely nothing to Miss Beresford's discredit? Mr. Vernon, it is a pity that your principal coadjutor is failing you. Do you think it will be advisable to persist in accusing Miss Beresford of felony?"

Harry Vernon was as pale as a sheet, his wife scarlet with baffled rage. Veritable wild beasts both of them were. But it was evident enough that their fangs had been suddenly drawn, for the woman remained silent, and the man muttered between his teeth: "Of course, if my principal witness fails me, I have no case, so it is no use having Miss Beresford arrested. Constable, I will pay you something for the trouble you have been put to, and then you can go."

"What! Without making no arrest, after finding all these things in the young lady's basket?" objected the policeman, who scented more than money enough to pay him for his trouble. He would probably want paying for his silence, and he continued: "Either the lady has stolen the things, or the case has been trumped up, just as she said, and if I'm not to finish making an arrest for stealing, I'll have to make one for conspiracy."

"Nothing of the sort," snapped Harry Vernon. "Miss Beresford denies everything, and we must give her the benefit of the doubt."

"Pardon me," was Maurice Ray's interjection. "To give anybody the benefit of the doubt is virtually to put the stigma of guilt upon them. That will not do for me. Mr. Vernon—once for all, do you believe that Miss Beresford had the remotest intention of taking anything from this house which did not belong to her?"

"Well, perhaps—"

"No perhaps, if you please. Has Miss Beresford touched anything of yours with the intention of depriving you of it?"

"I own that I may have been mistaken, and regret that my wife and I were somewhat hasty in jumping to conclusions."

"You mean that you know she is innocent?"

"Yes. I believe her to be quite innocent."

"But what about all those things having been found, packed ready for removal, in her dress-basket?"

"Some of the servants very probably put them there, for some reason or other."

"Not Miss Beresford?"

"No. Now I come to think of it, she could not have done so, as she went out before some of the things disappeared. I'm sorry the mistakes have been made, and apologise most fully to Miss Beresford for having misjudged her."

Everybody else had maintained a breathless silence during this conversation, but there was quite a babel of tongues for a moment or two after my enemies had been compelled to retract all their iniquitous accusations against me. The policeman protested that "he'd be blown if he ever saw the like of that afore," though he raised no objections when Mr. Vernon suddenly asked him to go to another room with him, where they could settle with each other quietly, and I fancy he extorted a neat little sum out of the man who sent for him to arrest me, for he soon quitted the house with a broad smile on his face.

"Mrs. Vernon, I'm afraid you are not very well," was Mr. Fisher's solicitous remark. "Let me take you away from these disagreeable people."

Annabel hastily took the proffered arm of her confederate in swindling, and the pair left their intended victim in triumphant possession of the restored esteem of the persons who had been summoned to witness her downfall and disgrace!

"You have saved me again," I said to Mr. Ray, the tears of passionate thankfulness swimming in my eyes. "I owe you first my life, and then my reputation and liberty! If I lived a thousand years, I could never repay the great services you have done me."

"Then do not try," was the kindly response. "The knowledge that I arrived here in time is reward enough for me. And now, the sooner you quit Vernon Towers the better. I arranged about your luggage, as promised, but you have missed the train you should have caught, and there is not another until midnight."

"Miss Beresford," exclaimed Edith Bainbrig, coming up to me and kissing me warmly. "We owe you no end of reparation for doubting you even for a moment. Show that you forgive us by coming home with us, and staying there for a few days, till you have got over the shock these events must have caused you. Mr. Ray knows that we are not likely to treat you badly."

"No, that won't do at all," protested Mrs. Grainger. "I have the first lien on Miss Beresford's good nature. She promised to visit me, and don't you forget that you are also both due at my house to-morrow."

I would have preferred to visit the Bainbrigs, rather than Mrs. Grainger, to whom I had not taken much of a fancy. But she seemed to be very kind now, and I left my friends to arrange for my immediate disposal amongst themselves, the result being that, escorted by Mr. Ray, and fortified by the good wishes of the brother and sister, I and my belongings, the latter properly packed, went home with the portly widow.

EPISODE XV.

Out of the Flying-Pan into the Fire.

At the door Mr. Ray bade me good-bye for a couple of days or so.

"I'm very sorry to lose sight of you so soon," he said, looking so earnestly at my blushing face that I blushed all the more. "Unfortunately, my time is not exactly altogether my own. Just now, I am staying at the residence of the Lord Lieutenant of the County, who has been good enough to give me several commissions for miniatures. I finished one yesterday, and am to begin another this afternoon, so I shall be rather busy for awhile."

"I wish you would paint a miniature of me," exclaimed

Mrs. Grainger. "I don't mind how much I pay for it, so long as it is pretty."

"Poor Mr. Ray," I thought compassionately. "It will be a difficult task to make a pretty picture from Mrs. Grainger."

But it is a usual failing for us all to want our likenesses to be very unlike us. If we are pretty, we want them to be lovely. If we are plain, we want them to be at least handsome. And if we are ugly, we vow the painter has not done his work well, if he does not produce something quite beautiful. This being the case, it follows that the most successful portrait painters are always those who are adepts in the art of idealising, and it would seem that Mr. Ray had studied this art very diligently, for he showed no hesitation in accepting the commission just offered him.

"Then come straight here from the castle," said Mrs. Grainger. "Miss Beresford will still be here when you come, and we will all have a good time together."

The prospect of seeing Maurice Ray again, and of living for some days in the same house with him, was very acceptable to me, and by the time my genial hostess and I were having a belated lunch together, my elasticity of spirits had almost brought back the usual colour to my cheeks.

The Bainbrigs had gone home, after announcing their determination never to enter Vernon Towers again. They also promised to drive over to Trenewth that evening, but, greatly to my disappointment, Mr. Bainbrig came without his sister.

"Edith turned very seedy," he explained, "and asked me to excuse her at present."

"What a pity!" lamented Mrs. Grainger. "I had so looked forward to a quiet rubber, and now there will only be three of us! I'm fearfully disappointed!"

"So am I," agreed Harold Bainbrig. "But there's no help for it. It was no use pressing Edith to come when her head, as she expressed it, was turning like a millpond."

"Is it necessary to play bridge?" I asked timidly. "Can't we amuse ourselves in some other way?"

I felt it due to my conscience, and to the unhappiness I had already endured, to enter a feeble protest against the game. But I was as eager to have another rubber—under fair conditions—as the others were, and I saw no harm in pursuing a course of amusement which was in itself harmless.

"It is only dangerous," I told myself, "when money is played for, thus offering temptations to cheat. I don't intend to play for money any more, so it would be foolish for me to spoil other people's enjoyment."

It was easy for me to make a wise resolve when confronted by no special temptation. But, as it proved, it was not so easy to adhere to my resolve, for both Mrs. Grainger and Mr. Bainbrig objected to playing for the mere fun of the thing.

"But you shan't be mulcted, my dear," was the former's assurance. "The question is—who will make a fourth?"

At this moment a servant announced a visitor, and our hostess smiled with pleasure.

"Just fancy! Isn't it lucky?" she exclaimed. "I didn't expect him till next week, and he's turned up to-night instead."

"May we ask the name of the gentleman whose advent is so welcome?" inquired Mr. Bainbrig. And I felt my heart grow heavy with a premonition of further evil when the glib answer was given him: "It is a gentleman whom you have both met recently, and whom you will, I am sure, be pleased to meet again. It is Mr. Taskot."

I tried not to think the visit of ill-omen to me. But I could not rid myself of the fancy, and ere many hours were over, I had ample proof that I was not to be allowed to forget the unhappy arrangement which put me in the clutches of unscrupulous acquaintances.

Mr. Maurice Ray had saved me from the Vernons. But could he save me from the man who now began to trade upon the power which "our secret" gave him?

(To be continued next week.)

THEY had been discussing a certain evergreen topic that seemed to crop up at regular intervals over the tea-cups at Myrtle Villa.

"I don't care what you say," declared Hetty, the hostess, pouring out fresh tea, "I don't care what you say—a man may be good-looking and clever, he may possess all the virtues under the sun—I wouldn't give that for him if he hadn't perfect manners!"

"Then you'll never get married," returned Kate, the matter-of-fact, with great decision. "Men with perfect manners don't exist."

"The species has died out," put in Miranda sadly.

"They never existed," retorted Kate.

"Our grandmothers tell us——" began Miranda dreamily.

"Oh, I know what you're going to say," interrupted Kate.

"Of course, our grandmothers' lovers were paragons of perfection. Fifty years hence we shall talk about our lovers in the same way."

"Because our memories have grown dim along with our eyes, I suppose you mean," said Hetty. "Well, I daresay there's some truth in that."

"But then——" began Molly, who up to this point had been a silent listener.

"Well?" queried the others expectantly.

"It was not often that Molly could be roused to argument.

"I was only going to say," Molly went on, "that it isn't only a dim memory that makes one forget people's faults. If you really love anybody, you know——"

"Who's that talking about love?" demanded a masculine voice, the owner of which had just that moment entered the room.

"If you're good, Jack," said Hetty, as her brother shook hands with her guests, "you shall have some tea and listen to what Molly was going to say when you had the bad manners to interrupt her. Go on, Molly."

"Oh, never mind."

"But this won't do, Miss Molly," protested Jack. "Don't you see how badly you're treating me? You're making a wet blanket of me against my will."

"Come, Molly," said Kate. "You see," she explained to Jack, "we were talking about the kind of men we wanted to marry, and Julia said that her man must be handsome, clever, strong, manly, gentle, sympathetic, and unselfish, and then Hetty declared that she wouldn't look at a man unless he had perfect manners, which were more important than all the other virtues put together, and I argued there was 'no such a puss' as a man with perfect manners—and——"

"And that there never had been 'such a puss'," continued Miranda, "and that when our grandmothers talked of the delightful men of their young days, it was because their memories had become impaired."

"And at that, Molly here was up in arms in a minute," added Hetty. "Tell us what you were going to say, Molly."

"I only think," said Molly shyly, "that one can forget a man's faults without the help of a bad memory—if one really loves him, I mean."

"Bravo, Miss Molly!" cried Jack. "It's refreshing to listen to you, in this age of scoffers."

"What Molly says may be true of some people," remarked Hetty, with an air of superior knowledge, "but I'm sure love would never blind me to any man's faults."

"That shows how little you know about the subject," rejoined her brother. "By your own confession, Hetty, you've never been in love."

"That's because I'm hypercritical."

"Hetty expects too much," explained Kate. "She wants a man with perfect manners."

"And perfect good taste in everything," added Hetty.

"Men are only human," murmured Jack. "They're apt to make little mistakes sometimes. But you always were hard on our sex, Hetty."

IN SPITE OF IT

Telling of an Experiment which Proved Successful.

"Because I decline to fall in love with a man who puts his feet on my mantelpiece and wears scarlet neckties."

"And you honestly imagine that it's because men's manners aren't nice that you've never fallen in love?"

"Yes, I do," replied Hetty firmly.

"My dear girl," said Jack, "you're labouring under a delusion. The fact of your never having been in love has nothing whatever to do with your hypercritical notions about the manners of my sex. To use a hackneyed phrase, you've never met your affinity. I'm quite convinced that when he does turn up, you'll fall in love with him, even if his manners are not absolute perfection."

"Never!" declared Hetty.

"I believe your brother is right," said Kate.

"Time will show," remarked Julia oracularly.

"You're wrong, Jack," said Hetty. "If ever I do fall in love—of which I'm extremely doubtful myself—it will be with a man with perfect taste and perfect manners."

"So you think now. Wait and see. I shouldn't be surprised, Hetty, if you could find it in your heart to forgive quite elementary rudeness, and even a scarlet necktie, when you do fall in love."

At this there was a general exclamation of dissent.

"Oh, Mr. Lawrence, you're going too far!" protested Julia. "No girl could fall in love with a man who wore a scarlet necktie."

"Or who forgot to raise his hat to a lady," said Miranda.

"Or lighted a pipe without her permission," added Kate.

"Of course not," said Hetty. "Jack, you're getting absurd. Have some more tea and change the subject."

"By all means," said Jack cheerfully. "All the same, I stick to my opinion."

"And I to mine," retorted Hetty.

"That's how every argument ends," remarked Kate, philosophically.

"Time will show," repeated Julia the oracle.

"I'm bringing a friend home to dinner to-night, Hetty," said Jack, a few days later. "You don't mind?"

"Of course not," replied Hetty, who was her brother's housekeeper. "Who is it, Jack?"

"You'll hardly remember him—Jim Fergusson. You were quite a kiddie when he was here last."

"I seem to remember his name, but I don't remember him."

"I haven't seen him for years—ran across him quite accidentally last night. He's going to settle down at home for good—been all over the world, you know. He's a decent sort of chap, Hetty. You ought to like him!"

And with that Jack departed for his day's grind at the office.

Her brother's announcement did not disturb Hetty very much. Jack was always bringing friends home to dinner in this informal fashion, and she felt no particular curiosity about Mr. Jim Fergusson.

When he appeared that evening, Hetty's lack of curiosity changed to a feeling of mild disapproval.

She had long ago encouraged her brother to dispense with the ceremonial of evening dress at these little dinners, but it was something of a shock to her to welcome a visitor attired in a light tweed suit, brown boots, and—horror of horrors!—a necktie of the brightest scarlet.

When Hetty had partially recovered from this blow, she noticed that Mr. Fergusson was not a bad-looking man. If it hadn't been for that tie, she could almost have thought him handsome! When she had known him for half an hour, she decided that he was one of the most interesting, as well as one of the most provoking people she had ever met.

He talked well, almost brilliantly, on every topic that happened to present itself, but oh, the lamentable crudity of his manners!

"It's evident he hasn't travelled about the world with his eyes shut," reflected Hetty. "Then why, oh, why, hasn't he learnt how to eat peas!"

But, alas! It wasn't only Jim Fergusson's method of eating peas that Hetty objected to. She saw, with pained surprise, that he ate his soup by putting the point of the spoon into his mouth, and that he used his bread to sop up the gravy. Then, too, he was inattentive to a criminal degree. He helped himself to salt and mustard, but it did not occur to him to pass them to his neighbour.

He consumed an unpeeled apple for desert by the simple process of biting into it, and when coffee arrived Hetty was therefore not surprised to find that he ignored the sugar-tongs.

Hetty glanced furtively at her brother from time to time. She wondered whether Jack had noticed their guest's eccentricities. She rather thought he had—he seemed so silent and absent-minded, and sat with his eyes ostentatiously glued to his plate during the greater part of his meal.

Mr. Fergusson himself appeared beautifully unconscious of the dismay he was creating. He talked with cheerful fluency between his bites, and, though handicapped by the fact that he bore the burden of the conversation, contrived to make an excellent dinner.

When Hetty left them to their wine and cigars, it was Jack who rose to open the door for his sister. The observance of such little courtesies did not seem to interest his friend.

And yet, Hetty was obliged to admit that, apart from his dress and manners, her guest was delightful.

He fascinated her in spite of herself, though when he had gone, and Jack inquired: "Well, what do you think of him, Hetty?" She shrugged her shoulders and retorted lightly:

"What did you expect?"

Jack looked disappointed.

"I thought he would interest you," he remarked.

"So he does," replied Hetty, "but his manners set my teeth on edge."

"They are rather odd," admitted Jack, "but one ought to forgive much to a clever fellow like that."

"Just because he's clever, his manners irritate me all the more. He ought to know better."

"He's knocked about the world a lot," said Jack apologetically.

"Which usually has the opposite effect upon a man," rejoined his sister. "A man who has seen the world ought to know how to behave better than a man who's stayed at home all his life."

"But you forget, he chose to rough it."

"I don't care how he acquired those manners," said Hetty.

"I only know that they're very irritating."

"I'm sorry," replied Jack. "Does that mean I mustn't bring him here again?"

"No—of course not," said Hetty hastily. "I didn't say I disliked Mr. Fergusson. On the contrary, I—I like him very much; but, oh, Jack, his tie was dreadful!"

"A red one!" said Jack. "How curious after our argument the other night."

"Very," returned Hetty, a trifle shortly. And Jack said nothing more that evening.

Mr. Fergusson had taken to calling pretty frequently at Myrtle Villa, and it must be confessed that Hetty did not altogether discourage his visits.

She was not very clear in her own mind as to her precise feelings towards Jack's friend.

He interested her. Seeing how clever and well read and all that sort of thing he was, what was more natural than

that? she reflected, arguing with her conscience. She had rather fallen into the habit of arguing with her conscience of late. Somehow, it seemed necessary to do so whenever her thoughts dwelt on Jim Fergusson.

Hetty possessed a very fair share of sound commonsense.

She never, like many of her sex, indulged in violent flirtations and called them platonic friendships. She was too sensible and too honest for that.

Neither did she overrate her own charms. She was far from imagining that every man who paid her the slightest attention was bound to be madly in love with her.

On the other hand, she never wilfully blinded herself to the truth where the signs and tokens were unmistakable.

And so it happened that, not many months after Jim Fergusson's first introduction to her, Hetty acknowledged to herself, with some reluctance, it must be confessed, that it was her duty to discourage certain advances on the part of Jack's friend if she did not wish to merit the charge of heartless flirtation.

"Of course I'm not in love with him," she argued with herself. "I could never be in love with a man who dresses and behaves as he does, that goes without saying."

But, though it "went without saying," she found it necessary to say it pretty often, each time with a queer little pain at her heart.

She had begun, moreover, to invent excuses for Jim Fergusson's behaviour.

"It's absentmindedness that makes him walk into a room in front of me, and sit down when he ought to be handing me a chair, and—and all that sort of thing," she argued. "Of course he doesn't mean to be rude. Clever people are often like that. All the same," she would add, more regretfully than she cared to own, "that doesn't alter the fact that it's bad manners to do all these things, and one can't get over bad manners!"

On the very day when Hetty had finally made up her mind to put a stop to their growing intimacy, Jim Fergusson called when Jack was out.

"I'm not at home," said Hetty firmly.

The maid who announced the visitor looked embarrassed.

"I—I'm very sorry, miss," she stammered, "but I told the gentleman you were in."

"What made you do that?" asked Hetty.

"I thought," explained the girl, "as you'd always been at home to Mr. Fergusson before, miss—"

"I see," said Hetty, turning red. "Ask Mr. Fergusson to come in, Jane."

She was inconsistent enough to feel relieved at Jane's mistake.

At any rate, she had done her duty. She could not be held responsible for the maid's blunder.

When one has made up one's mind, as a matter of duty, to be discreet, it is rather pleasant to be obliged by circumstances over which one has no control, to be exactly the opposite thing.

Jim Fergusson stalked into Hetty's drawing-room in the somewhat blundering fashion peculiar to big men, and sat down gingerly upon a certain fragile structure, known by courtesy as an "easy chair," which his hostess pointed out to him.

"I'm sorry Jack is out," remarked Jim, with obvious mendacity.

"So am I," said Hetty, with equal lack of candour. "He's dining with some friends, so I'm afraid you'll have to put up with my company."

Considering Hetty's recent resolution, it was not a wise remark.

Jim seized it eagerly.

"It's you who are putting up with me, Miss Lawrence," he said. "I sometimes feel as though I were taking a mean advantage of your kindness of heart. But if you only knew the pleasure it gives me to come here in this informal fashion," he went on hurriedly before Hetty could reply. "I—I'm awfully grateful to you."

"Why should you be grateful?" asked Hetty.

"For allowing me to bore you so persistently," he returned.

"You don't bore me in the least," protested Hetty laughingly. "I'm not so unselfish as all that, I assure you."

"I'm glad," said Jim, with more seriousness, Hetty felt, than her light tone merited.

Somehow conversation that evening did not progress very brilliantly. Hetty felt unaccountably nervous and ill at ease, and her companion seemed absolutely stupid.

The two started topic after topic with hopeless futility, and finally, as though by mutual consent, lapsed into desperate silence.

Hetty had not lighted the lamps, and only the flickering fire illuminated the room.

It was a chilly night, and they had drawn their chairs close up to the hearth. Each sat staring into the fire, as though for inspiration.

There was a long and painful pause which Hetty felt an idiotic inability to break. The fire seemed to mesmerise her into silence.

Presently she became dimly conscious that her companion was speaking again. She began to listen dreamily, and with a strange lack of interest, to his confused and halting words, until, all at once, she awoke with a start to the fact that Jim Fergusson was proposing to her.

She could see his bronzed, handsome face quite clearly in the firelight, and its expression was more eloquent than the stammering words. It sent a strange, new thrill to her heart.

"I love you," said Jim, and his honest grey eyes shone with a light that was not all reflected from the fire.

He had risen, and stood looking down upon her, waiting for her answer.

Slowly and timidly she raised her face to his, and he bent down to catch her whispered words.

What had come over Hetty?

She scarcely understood herself. She did not doubt or question. She only knew that a wonderful, undreamt of happiness had come to her.

This man had told her that he loved her, and she—well, she knew now that she loved him too.

At that moment she could have laughed aloud at her own past folly. She scorned her old self with a lofty, happy scorn. Scales that had blinded her seemed suddenly to have fallen from her eyes.

How mad, how *little*, she had been to weigh her lover's imperfections in the balance against this splendid, wonderful thing called love!

And so she laid her soft cheek against the scarlet neck-tie, and sealed her fate upon Jim's lips.

"Now I'm going to confess," said Jim, when Jack came home and had taken in the situation. "Will you promise, darling, not to be hard on me?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Hetty, feeling vaguely alarmed.

"You'll have to forgive him, Hetty, because it's all my fault," said Jack, beginning to laugh.

"What's all your fault?"

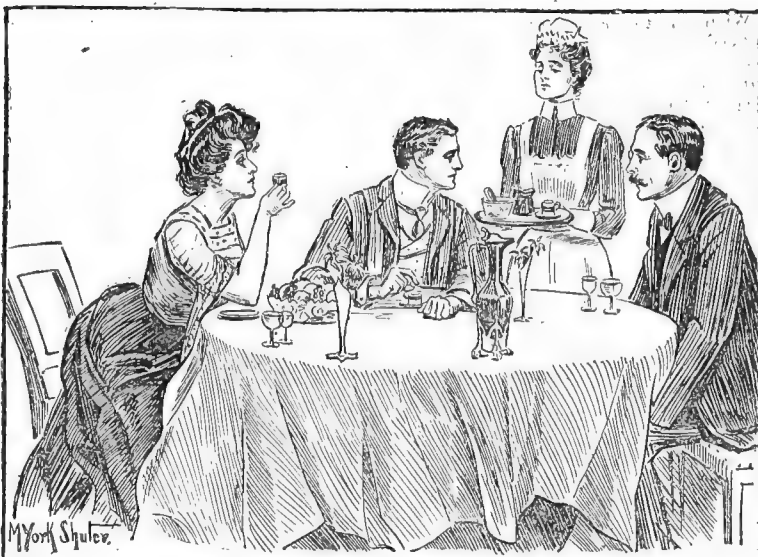
"The scarlet necktie, and—and all the rest of it," said Jack.

"Meaning my atrocious behaviour generally," said Jim.

"He'll never do it again, Hetty," said Jack.

Hetty gazed from one to the other in utter bewilderment.

"The fact is," continued Jack, "I wanted to make an



When coffee arrived Hetty was not surprised to find that he ignored the sugar tongs.

experiment. Do you remember that declaration of yours, Hetty, that you couldn't fall in love with a man unless he had perfect taste and perfect manners?"

"I remember," said Hetty, blushing self-consciously.

"Well, I wanted to put your theory to the test, and when I happened to run across Jim that day and invited him to dinner, it occurred to me that my opportunity had come. I had an idea that if ever you fell in love at all it would be with a man like Jim, and so I persuaded him to become a party to my little plot."

"I didn't know you then, you see, Hetty," put in Jim hastily, "or I would never have been fool enough to give my promise. Besides, I wasn't so vain as to suppose you could possibly care for me under any circumstances, so I didn't mind making myself out a bit worse than I am."

"Of course," continued Jack, "I, for my part, felt convinced your theory was moonshine, Hetty, or I would never have invited Jim here to risk the experiment. Once he'd seen you, though, I had jolly hard work to keep him from throwing that necktie into the fire, but as you know I succeeded in refraining him."

"I got to loathe the beastly thing," said Jim. "The more I got to know you, the more I got to loathe it, and everything it represented. But Jack was relentless. He bound me to my promise."

"I believe he'd have broken it, all the same, if I hadn't pointed out to him, that your love, Hetty, wouldn't be worth much if it didn't rise superior to his little eccentricities."

Hetty made no reply.

"You're not vexed?" asked Jim, dismayed by her persistent silence.

At this Hetty smiled a little whimsically.

"I suppose I ought to be angry with both of you for deceiving me so shamefully," she said at last.

"Well, of course," retorted Jack, quite unabashed, "it's annoying to give anybody the chance of saying 'I told you so.' But, under the circumstances, you can't blame me for saying it. You see, you fell in love with him in spite of the tie and the manners. I was right, after all."

"Yes," said Hetty, looking at Jim in a way that made his heart beat very fast. "Yes, you were right, but, all the same, I'm glad he doesn't care for scarlet neckties!"

Still, once every year, on the anniversary of their wedding-day, Jim wears a tie of the brightest scarlet hue.

Grete Hahn.



THE CERTAINTY THAT FAILED.

A Tale of a Mean Trick at Doncaster
Races.

REGINALD CASHEL, late of His Majesty's 10th Hussars, was in a quandary. The money

market was tight, not a Jew nor a Gentile would advance another penny on his signature—they had learnt by experience that the Captain's notes were worth no more than the paper on which they were written.

Luck had been dead against him. He had laid a favourite at Goodwood on the confident assurance, of someone in the know, that the horse was not meant to stay the course.

"And he won by a head," exclaimed the Captain, furious at the recollection, "by a head!"

"My dear boy, what can you expect?" said his cousin. "Jockeys are only human after all. They win races they ought not to win, and lose those they should have left unlost."

This reflection did not comfort Cashel. To use his own words, he was absolutely broke. There was not the ghost of a good thing on his racing horizon, and his duns would wait no longer.

In despair he went to Lady Betty Fordyce, the cousin aforesaid, a young and adorable widow.

"I'm done for, Betty," he said dolefully. "I think I shall go to Africa and dig for diamonds."

"There are none left there, Reggie, they're all at the Hague. You'd better wait till after Doncaster, at any rate."

"What is there to wait for?"

"Lord Wingham and the Onyx Cup. He's running a couple in the race, you know. If you could find out which horse was meant and who's riding, you might pull through yet."

"It's a bright idea, but I don't see how I'm going to work it. I hardly know the man, not well enough at all events to ask him for a racing tip."

"Don't trouble about that, I'll ask him—"

"You, Betty," Cashel paused. "Poor Wingham!" he said slowly. "Your admirers, my dear cousin, are as many as their looks are various."

"There's nothing the matter with Lord Arthur, thank you."

"Manners and morals unimpeachable, eh? Don't trouble to expound his virtues, I know the type."

"I am prejudiced in favour of manners, I confess. I'm sorry you don't like Wingham."

"I don't like anyone you flirt with. I want all your gifts and graces to myself."

"Be serious, Reggie. Think of Doncaster and your debts."

"There's little chance of forgetting either. When will you work the oracle, Betty?"

"Now, in a few minutes. I expect Wingham almost directly."

Lord Arthur Wingham suffered from a burning desire to distinguish himself in Lady Betty's eyes, a desire which made him take strange and sudden resolutions.

"We were just talking about you and the races," said Lady Betty as he entered. "I was telling Reggie I felt certain you were going to bring off something good at Doncaster. He wants to learn all about it."

"My cousin is disposed to plunge, you know," interposed

Cashel. "I suggested she'd better find out which of your two she was to back, before she puts her money on."

Lord Arthur coloured with pleasure.

"It's awfully good of you to care, Lady Betty," he stammered. "And I shall be delighted to let you both into my secret. Only"—he drew himself up with a delightful air of importance, "it is a secret. Not a word must get about."

"Of course not. You can trust me, and Reggie never gives anything away."

A remark more true than Lady Betty meant.

"I'm running 'Viking' and 'Hotspur,'" said Wingham eagerly. "We tried them both this morning. We tried them at the weights with Harris and Rogers up. 'Viking' won by a head, but it was a very near thing."

"'Viking' is a sluggard. He wants riding every yard," said Cashel. "Harris will have his work cut out."

Lord Wingham flushed a deeper red.

"Harris isn't riding 'Viking' for this race," he said slowly.

"Why, I thought you'd a retainer on him?"

"So I have—but I shan't let him ride."

"Who on earth are you going to put up?"

"'Viking's' owner fluttered nervously. He clasped his chair tightly, and glanced appealingly at Betty.

"I'm going to ride myself," he said, "and—I shall ride to win."

Betty's eyebrows formed an acute angle. Cashel was heard to give a strained sort of a cough.

In an agony of self-consciousness Wingham rose.

"I know you think I'm an idiot to dream of such a thing," he said. "But listen to me, and then you'll understand why I'm going to do it. You see, everyone regards me as a duffer. They're always chipping me at the mess, asking what's the good of horses to a man who can't handle 'em. I don't mind for myself, I know I'm not clever. But I don't like you to think that of me. I want you to be proud, to feel that I'm not quite unworthy of your—your friendship. That's why I'm going to ride, that's why I'm going to win. You'll be there, Lady Betty?"

"Of course," said Betty, pink in her cheeks, "and I'll wear your colours."

"I won't disgrace them, *really*. You don't think I've much chance, Cashel?" He turned to Reginald.

"Frankly, I don't. It's very plucky of you, and a pretty compliment to pay my cousin. But—"

The Captain shrugged his shoulders and smiled in a most superior style.

Lord Arthur winced, and Betty somehow felt annoyed. Reggie need not have crushed the poor boy so unmercifully, it was positively unfeeling.

"I hope I shall prove you in the wrong," said Wingham. "Don't lay against me too heavily, because I'm going to win," and with a laugh his lordship departed.

"What do you think of it, Reggie?" asked his cousin.

"Magnificent, my dear, for me. I shall make a scoop, and no mistake. 'Viking's' at five to two now and they think Harris is riding. Even then I wouldn't stand him, but *now* Betty, I'm going to make my fortune. I shall lay against Wingham down to my last farthing, and shall clear £20,000 if I make a penny."

"I would not be quite so sure. Wingham does not ride badly."

"Ride? My dear child, what are you thinking of? Even among amateurs he's nervous and flustered as a cat, he came an awful cropper at the regimental steeplechase. I leave you to imagine what he'll be like with Loates and Woods near him at the start and Cannon alongside at the finish—if he ever gets to the finish. It's absurd!"

"I can't see it's so ridiculous as you say. Anyhow"—Lady Betty spoke incisively—"I shall back 'Viking' and his rider."

"I didn't know you had much money to throw away, Betty," he sneered. "Hadden't you better hedge?"

"That's not my way."

"Well, you'll get badly left. Good-bye."

From a financial point of view the morning had been a great success, and yet Cashel was conscious of a feeling of dissatisfaction. Lady Betty had shown more interest in Lord Wingham than he cared about. She usually treated men—always excepting Reggie—with a delightful indifference. Cashel was fond of his cousin, in a lazy sort of way, and had a notion that some day he would marry her and settle down. It annoyed him to think Betty might not agree.

For the next few days he was busy laying heavily but cautiously against "Viking." He felt convinced that Wingham's defeat was a dead certainty, and he made his book accordingly.

He grew less confident as the race drew near, however. Wingham was looking very fit, and Betty's continual assertions that he had a chance took an effect even on Cashel's scepticism.

Suppose he were wrong and "Viking" won after all? It was a possibility to shudder at. "Viking's" defeat was the last, the only hope of paying his debts. What if he had miscalculated? Suppose by some hideous mischance Wingham brought his horse first past the winning post. It would mean ruin. He would have to go under, to drop out of the old set, and pass a miserable existence hiding from his creditors. The night before the race he was a prey to terrible misgivings.

Pacing up and down his room, he recalled instances of men—duffers as a rule—who under the spur of excitement had done great things. Wingham might be such an one. And if it were so, if the youth plucked up sufficient nerve to ride "Viking" as he should be ridden—Cashel grew pale and caught his lip between his teeth. It was a risk, an awful risk.

If he were only sure that Wingham would fail, how different life would look! With twenty thousand he could start afresh. He'd economise, and, yes, would marry Betty. If only he were sure, if only. He stopped short and glanced half fearfully round the room. Why not make sure? The thing was easily done. On the course to-morrow, just before the race, he had only to offer Wingham a nip from his flask, whisky and water, with a dash of something else. No one would ever know. It would do no harm, a blow to Betty's vanity, a fall to his Lordship's pride. Trifles when weighed against a man's ruin.

And yet he did not easily persuade himself. His life had not been white, but it had held no spot so black as the thing he contemplated doing. It was a mean thing, a treacherous thing—but he must do it. Long he sat pondering, and when at last he rose his face was set.

Next morning he was up early. All night long he had ridden, in fancy, a mad race, straining to gain a point that as he neared, fell farther and farther away from him. He looked pale and haggard and felt so wretchedly ill that he had recourse to a strong pick-me-up. He could not do what must be done without. From his dressing-case he took a phial, measured a portion of the contents—it was powerful and had to be used with care—and drank the dose.

Gradually he felt better, and sitting down waited till his heart beat steadily and his hand ceased to tremble. Then he took up his pocket flask, ready filled—all but—with whisky and water. He was dressed and it was time to start. There was but one thing left to do. Furtively he glanced towards the table, towards a little bottle containing an opiate he had purchased in readiness the night before. He still fingered his flask and hesitated long.

The chiming of the clock roused him, he must hurry, he would be late. With a quick movement he snatched up the bottle and emptied the contents into the flask.

No chance for Lord Wingham now, Reginald Cashel had made sure at last!

The bell had just been rung to clear the course for the Onyx Cup at Doncaster. A hush fell over the ring, but a moment later a shout, half of surprise, half of mirth, rent the

air, for opposite "Viking" stood, as rider, the significant title "owner."

Wingham, deathly pale, and generally speaking, all to pieces, shuddered at the cries of ten to one, a hundred to eight, fifteen to one "Viking," that surged round him.

Betty flashed a look from him to Cashel.

"Pull yourself together, Arthur," she said quickly. "Reggie, say something, do something, he's ready to faint."

Cashel glanced at his Lordship with a critical eye. He looked bad enough certainly, and the odds were against his getting any better. Still—it was safer to run no risks, at the last moment he might recover his nerve.

"Cheer up, Wingham," he said lightly. "Here, take my flask and drink success to Lady Betty's colours."

His Lordship took the flask, and drank off the whisky.

"It's done me good, old chap," he said, "thanks awfully," and with a creditable attempt to smile, he went to get weighed in. Cashel and Lady Betty adjourned to the top of the stand.

"Will he ever get through?" asked Lady Betty anxiously.

"I think not. In my opinion he'll collapse at the first post. It will be bad for you, Betty, eh?"

"Horrible. I've dropped a lot of money, Reggie. Besides"—she paused. "I feel so sorry for him. It's a plucky thing to do. He can't help being nervous."

Reggie agreed, and murmured a few words of consolation if not hope. He felt so lighthearted, so confident that he was ready to feel sorry for Betty or Wingham or anybody else. Who would not feel confident with twenty thousand pounds almost in one's grasp?

"Here they are," cried Betty, as the horses came trooping up ready to form in line for the start. "Oh, Reggie, look at Arthur. Look!"

Cashel turned quickly to face the biggest surprise in his life.

Flushed certainly and laughing, and gesticulating rather wildly, but sitting his horse well, and waving his whip triumphantly to Betty came Wingham, every trace of nervousness gone, and looking as if the race were in his pocket.

What could it mean; had he by chance made a mistake? Cashel felt wildly in his racing coat. No, it was all right, the flask was just on empty. Wingham had drunk it nearly all.

It was too soon, perhaps, for the drug to take effect. Another minute and Wingham would grow dazed, he would falter, sway—

"They're off!" cried Betty in a fever of excitement.

Cashel bent forward with eager, straining eyes. First he saw "Viking" jump away in front, then he realised that his Lordship was riding as if for dear life, making every post a winning post. His heart almost ceased to beat, the course grew blurred before him. Then he had a momentary relief as he caught the murmurs of the ring. "Wingham must be mad, it isn't a five furlong scurry, he'll ride his horse to a standstill before he's half way down the course."

But then, as they came into the straight, and he caught sight of Wingham fifty yards ahead of his field, hope died within him; and when, whipping and spurring and shouting Wingham still kept his lead while "Viking"—no sluggard now, but going great guns—with his sides covered with foam, answered his rider's every call, Reginald Cashel realised his great coup had failed. He had soiled his honour to no purpose, degraded himself to no end. Wingham had won the race!

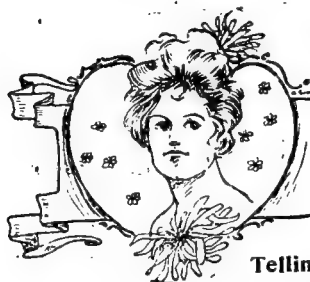
"It was your toast that did it, old chap," his Lordship exclaimed as he returned in triumph to the stand.

Cashel turned faint with a horrible suspicion. He hurried from the course and took the first train back to town.

It was even as Wingham said, Cashel had won him the race. In the flurry of the morning the Captain had snatched up the wrong bottle, emptying the pick-me-up instead of the narcotic into the flask, and the powerful stimulant had so wildly exhilarated his Lordship's nerves that he had ridden "Viking" for all he was worth.

In the solitude of his room, the Captain's heart grew heavy within him, for he had planned to make his fortune, had thought to marry Betty. And by his own act he had lost both.

John K.



AN EXTRAORDINARY COINCIDENCE.



Telling of a Slighted Invitation and Two Engagements.

It was only yesterday since he had seen her, and he was fully anticipating seeing her to-morrow, when a double knock of the peremptory postman order sounded, and the servant entered with an orange coloured envelope in her hand.

"A telegram for you, sir; the boy is waiting."

Dick Treherne tore open the message, and having hastily read it, tossed it, a crumpled ball, into the grate.

"No answer," he said curtly. For it ran thus, "Unavoidably prevented to-morrow. Will explain later.—" MABEL BRANCEPETTI."

Treherne had half expected something of this sort. Yesterday, when he had talked softly to her of the long afternoon he hoped to spend in her company, she had said somewhat dubiously,

"After all, Dick, I don't know whether I ought to have promised to go to the circus with you. You see Mr. Goldman sent round this morning to say he had got a box at the Hippodrome and he would take us up to London, and would we all come. It would be much nicer than a country show, wouldn't it? Much safer, I mean. Of course I should like to go with you awfully, but you know what a travelling circus is and how nervous I am in a crowd."

Dick had felt distressed at her speech then, for he had taken the best seats he could afford, and even stretched a point at that, but he was madly in love with her, and tried to laugh away her fears, promising to take splendid care of her, and genuinely believing she meant them seriously. But this message of hers at the last moment put a different complexion on affairs.

The fact of the matter was that Mabel had got a better invitation, and was behaving as she had once or twice behaved before under somewhat similar circumstances.

Dick had looked forward to the morrow, meaning to plead his cause then, and hoping that Mabel would consent to be the queen of his small kingdom; but he had at last awakened from this cherished dream, and now finally realised that Mabel would choose to marry for money rather than for love, that the devotion he offered would count little with her when compared with old Mr. Goldman's banking account.

Dick began to feel how vain his hopes had been, and with his eyes opened saw now the shallowness and frivolity of the character which could throw him over so heartlessly. The awakening was less painful than he had imagined it would be.

"That little cousin of hers, Julie Perrington, is worth a dozen of her, I'll be bound," he commented to himself. "Those blue eyes of hers look true and candid enough. Strange that even while I admired Mabel so much I always liked Julie best."

"I wish I had asked her to go with me. She would not have gone back on her word, I'm quite sure, even if she had had a better offer. But there! What a fool I am! No doubt she has a lover of her own. 'Fair, kind, and true,' as Shakespeare has it, does not go begging."

Mabel's telegram had upset and annoyed Treherne, and when he went to bed that night it was half with the intention of giving up the whole show. There was not much fun in going to a thing of that kind by oneself, he thought. But in the morning he awoke in a different frame of mind altogether.

He had dreamt all night long, and, strangely enough, Mabel had not been the subject of his sleeping thoughts. With the

vividness of reality his fancy had seen Julie—fair, slight, Julie, with the trusting eyes, at the mercy of a motley crowd. Hustled here and hustled there, surrounded by no lover's protecting arm, she reached her hands to Treherne, and wistfully implored his aid.

The ardour with which he sprang to the assistance of Beauty in distress effectually aroused him from his slumbers. He sprang out of bed with his mind made up. His dream had

made such an impression on him that, sober-minded individual that he was, he found himself leaving the house actually possessed by the romantic notion that before the day was out he was to play the part of knight-errant to Julie Perrington. He was quite determined now to make use of his seat at the circus, even if a vacant one yawned at his side.

He started in good time, and as soon as he was fairly out upon the country road found himself in the midst of a good-humoured, hastening crowd.

Presently, when he entered the field where the circus had been set up, he was brought to a standstill. His broad shoulders stood him in good stead, and in a little while he was able to move on; but people seemed to be pressing him on every side, and a slender form was wedged up against him.

It was Julie Perrington! She recognised Treherne at once, and his hand moved to his hat.

"Miss Perrington," he cried in delight, "let me take care of you."

She seemed to be on the verge of tears.

"Oh, Mr. Treherne," she cried, "I am quite alone! I had no idea it would be like this!"

"But how is this?" he cried, in astonishment. "Surely Mr. Goldman included you in his party?"

"He didn't mention me specially," she said, flushing; "but my aunt thought I was meant to be included, only Mabel said I had nothing smart enough to wear—except for a country show." Julie grew scarlet at the remembrance of the sneer, and added, "and that gave me the idea of coming in this way, for I have never seen a circus since I was a tiny child, and I did so want to."

Treherne's resentment was kindled against Mabel doubly for her unkindness towards her cousin and her selfishness.

"Miss Perrington," he said, "if you will allow me to constitute myself your escort, I think I can conduct you not only to a place of safety, but to a coign of vantage where we shall have a very good view."

Julie was all smiles now.

"Oh, how delightful!" she cried. "But, oh, how can I come! It will be robbing someone of their place, won't it?"

"I offered the seat to your cousin at first," acknowledged Treherne, "but she has thrown me over for the Goldman party."

"Perhaps she made some mistake about the day," said Julie. And Treherne thought what a generous little soul it was.

"There was no mistake," he answered smiling.

"Well, Miss Perrington, is my rejected seat worth your acceptance?"

She smiled too.

"I'm afraid I'm not proud at all," she confessed. "I am very sorry for your disappointment, for I know you must be disappointed, but I shall be so pleased to accept that seat, and I think you are very kind to offer me your escort."

They reached their places finally, and had a long wait before the performance began. But what of that? It did not seem long to Treherne, and he hoped not to Julie. He was finding out new beauties in her.

She was a fascinating little girl, and he had never had an opportunity like this before of realising her charm, nor of seeing how truly pretty she was.

Mabel was a dashing brunette, showy alike in dress and

appearance, and had completely overshadowed her tender, refined little cousin, who occupied a dependent position in the Brancepeth household, and Treherne was convinced in his own mind she was worth her weight in gold to the establishment.

When a team of piebald ponies came into the arena and showed off their graceful accomplishments, Julie's eyes sparkled, and her cheeks flushed with childish enjoyment. She leant forward in her excitement, displaying the graceful contour of her figure.

Treherne began to contrast her looks as favourably as her manners with those of Mabel, altogether he quite lost his heart to her. He had never spent any length of time in her society before, and her sweet, retiring ways had only made a vague impression on him during the few occasions he had seen her in company with Mabel, when the latter had always taken good care to monopolise the conversation.

No doubt many a heart is caught in the rebound, but maybe none the less surely held for that.

When the circus was all over, Dick heaved a sigh of regret, echoed by Julie. There still remained the task of getting home, and Dick was determined to escort Julie to her very door.

"Do you know," she said, as they walked along slowly side by side, "I never recognised you in the crowd until you turned round, and all the time I was trying hard to get to you because I thought, 'Here is a good broad pair of shoulders, if I get behind them I shall be safe.'"

Treherne laughed.

"You are making me compliments," he said.

"Oh," said Julie simply. "I should feel safe with you anywhere."

"I steered you safely through the crowd," said Treherne with gravity, "but if you want to prove your words you will trust me to steer you through life."

"Oh, Mr. Treherne, I don't understand!" said Julie.

"Give me hope," said Treherne, "that I may teach you to understand. I don't expect you to love me all at once, though a single day spent with you has been sufficient to give my heart into your keeping. Believe me," he added earnestly, "if I took the liberty of offering you a rejected escort I am not pleading with you to accept a rejected lover, but a very earnest one on his own account."

Her eyes met his bravely. "I have always loved you," she said, simply, "but I never hoped for such happiness."

Treherne parted with her at the house. He would not come in as she had begged him not to announce their engagement till the morrow.

The others had not yet returned, so she ran up to her own room to indulge in a delightful reverie.

Presently there came a knock at the door, and, without waiting for an answer, Mabel entered.

"I'm tired out," she said abruptly. "Julie, I wish you'd come and help me to bed."

Julie rose, too happy to be tired even after her long day.

"Yes, dear," she said gently, "you look worn out."

Mabel threw herself into a chair and raised her arms above her head. "At any rate," she said, "Mr. Goldman has proposed to me, and, needless to add, I have accepted him. I wish he were not quite so old, though, but I shall be the wife of a millionaire, and that's something. And now, let's hear about you, Julie. How did you get on? Did you see well?"

"I saw everything splendidly," said Julie. "I met Mr. Treherne, and he took care of me the whole time."

Mabel stared. "Oh," she said, "I suppose you know he asked me, but I don't care to go in that style, and I wired at the last I couldn't come. He was as cross as a bear with a sore head, I expect. You must have had a lively time!"

"He was not cross at all—to me," said Julie.

"I suppose he's fallen in love with you," sneered Mabel.

"At any rate, he asked me to marry him," said Julie, "and I have promised to be his wife."

Mabel began to laugh, but her voice sounded harsh and constrained as she affected to say carelessly, "So we are both engaged on the same day! What an extraordinary coincidence!"

Ellice Beere.



I HAVE much pleasure in announcing that next week I will publish the complete list of prize winners in the recent "Buried Stations" Competition. I am very sorry that competitors have had to possess their souls in patience for so long, but the task of checking has been an unexpectedly difficult one.

THIS paragraph is written to remind you that next week our eleventh Tartan Cover number will appear. The cover shows the design of the cloth of the Clan Macquarrie. Although this Scottish family is not a very large one, their ancestors were gallant men, and I am sure that everyone will agree that their tartan is one of the prettiest of all. I can also promise you that next week's number will be brimful of fine reading matter, quite up to the standard of, if not surpassing, the quality of any issue that has yet appeared, which, as you know, is saying a great deal.

My girl friends, have you a brother? My lady readers, have you a son? Have any of you got a male relation of any age or temperament? Do you want to please him? There is one absolutely infallible way to do so, and that is—buy him a copy of *The Boys' Leader*. This will make him your grateful servant for ever and ever, for it is the finest, purest, in all ways the best journal for healthy British lads. There is not a word in it that could be deemed "vulgar" by the most scrupulous person, and it has a special mission to perform. That is, it intends to put down that vile product of modern day sensation-mongers—the penny dreadful, that makes crime a virtue, sin a necessity. *The Boys' Leader* is the paper a boy can take home.

You will find on page 340 another "Love Problem." It is entitled, "Should a Husband Discuss His Business Affairs with His Wife?" There are, of course, two sides to this question, and the main clue to the answer is, "Does the wife wish to hear about them?" However, in certain cases, and probably in most cases, it is advisable for a husband to take his loving wife into his confidence, although it is by no means unlikely that sometimes a well-meaning man would refrain from burdening his wife with the care of financial matters, even when she might be of the utmost use to him. I will leave you to read the entertaining story, and to find out for yourself the moral it contains. This is the ninth article of the series, each of which, as I understand from the many congratulatory messages I have received, have been devoured with great eagerness.

ONCE more, and for almost the last time this season, I must appeal to you to help us in the great work we have taken in hand to alleviate as much as possible the misery of the poor children of London and of the big provincial cities. Great numbers of hapless boys and girls, poverty-stricken through no fault of their own, brought up amongst squalid surroundings wherein the sun seldom penetrates, have been made joyful for one day through the charity of our readers. Nine-pence gives a beautiful day's holiday to one child. Please send that sum, or double or treble or quadruple that sum to the Hon. Sec., FRESH AIR FUND, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Each donation will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Your Editor.

TWO

LOVERS.



A Sad Story of An

Unfortunate Love.

ETHEL HARPER looked disdainfully at the card which was laid upon the table beside her. She hesitated a long time before she spoke; then, with an impatient, "Tell him I will be down in a few minutes," caught up the bit of pasteboard, and tearing it into fragments, tossed it into the open fire.

In the drawing-room below a man paced the floor more like a wild beast in a cage than a caller waiting in a magnificent apartment for the lady of the house.

He was very pale; his hands worked nervously. He drew his breath hard, like a man in pain.

Ethel Harper came in and found him so, looking at him for a moment before he saw her, with a frown on her face which was not good to see. It destroyed the harmony of the perfect features.

It was a siren face still, but it wore its fatal, not its fascinating expression.

Its natural look came back as her guest turned towards her. She extended her hand with a smile that transformed her to an angel.

"Good evening," she said, gently. "I had half a mind to excuse myself to-night, for I——"

"Is it true, then?"

"True?"

"That you are going to the regimental ball this evening?"

"Yes."

"And with Colonel Carstairs?"

"Why not?"

"Why not? And you ask me that?"

He braced himself against the mantel as he confronted her. His black eyes, brilliant with a strange light, roved restlessly over the graceful figure in its exquisite costume. He brushed his hand across them, as if the sight bewildered him.

"And I—I—it is so, then? I wouldn't believe it when they told me. I am set aside for this man; I am——"

"They told you?" she repeated, drawing back from him. "I do not understand."

"Oh, you understand well enough," he retorted with quick bitterness; "it's the talk of the club and everywhere else. I suppose Colonel Carstairs hears it to. 'Dick Hawthorne has been thrown over since he lost his fortune, and the colonel is in favour now.' That's what they say, if you do not understand. Pleasant, isn't it?" he asked, as she frowned again. "I liked it. Oh, I assure you I was highly delighted! Why shouldn't I be?"

"Dick," she said, softly, coming closer to him, and laying her hand on his arm, "it is gossip, nothing else. Colonel Carstairs is my father's friend, and——"

"Oh, no doubt!" the young man sneered in reply. "Since when, I wonder? Since your father employed him as his lawyer? Harper and Company have experienced reverses, if mere gossip can be believed. It would be an awful pity, Ethel, if your father should lose his money as I've lost mine!"

She winced at the words. Then others, besides herself, knew of her father's desolate situation!

"I didn't come here to talk of such matters," he went on. "I've been working hard to get things straight again—for you. Ethel, if you will give me what you more than half-promised long ago—yourself, Ethel, when I have——"

He stopped suddenly in his impetuous words as she put out her hand.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked, almost roughly.

"I wish, Dick, I could make you understand me," she said.

"I do understand you," he replied eagerly. "I am not unreasonable—you know I am not, Ethel. I'm working like a man, trusting you, believing you will—— But to see you with other men, to hear you talked of, to feel that you are drifting away from me—I can't understand it, I tell you! I'm half mad with it all. I won't ask you for any promise now, Ethel, only to wear this ring for my sake. That is so little to ask of you, but it will mean so much to me!"

He had seized her hand. She drew it away haughtily.

"You must expect nothing from me. I never gave you reason, and now——"

"Never—never what?" he stammered. "Reason! What in Heaven's name was it then?"

"It isn't worth while to talk about it now," she resumed.

"I told you I was engaged for the evening. I will see you some other time—to-morrow, if you care to come."

She tried to look him in the face as she spoke. It was impossible, and, turning towards the mirror, she busied herself with readjusting the locks of golden hair clinging about the smooth, low brow. But her face blanched as she met his eyes in the glass. "Half mad," he had said. He looked like a maniac to her terrified sight.

With one swift movement he caught her by the throat, crushing the delicate lace and rosebuds in an iron hand. She tried to scream. She threw up her arms in an agony.

"If I could kill you!" he muttered, "I'd be sure of you!"

Another instant and he released his hold. He wrung his hands together. "My God! That you could hurt a woman, Dick Hawthorne!" he exclaimed wildly to himself, and without another look at her he rushed from the room, the front door shutting heavily behind him.

Ethel Harper rallied quickly. She was thankful she had not alarmed the house. "If this is only the end of it," she thought as she walked upstairs. She locked her door as she entered her room. It was necessary to repair damages before she rang for her maid to finish her toilet.

She could not explain the torn lace and the ruined rosebuds, nor the marks on the delicate flesh under them. Yet, knowing how far she was responsible for the violence of the man whom she had driven to desperation, she felt grateful that she had made so easy an escape.

Colonel Carstairs called for her an hour later. He was at the head of the regiment whose ball that night was the most brilliant of the season. No one was so much admired and envied as the lovely Miss Harper, already looked upon as the winner of the finest matrimonial prize in Society—the elegant, cultured, wealthy Colonel Carstairs.

It was almost morning before the carriage returned to the Harper's mansion. As the Colonel stepped from it he was rudely jostled by an intoxicated man standing on the pavement.

"Look out there, fellow!" he said, imperiously, catching him by the shoulder.

Miss Harper gave a quick cry as she caught sight of his face, and Colonel Carstairs glanced at him a second time.

"Upon my word, it's Hawthorne!" he exclaimed. "Is it possible?"

But the young man, muttering a few unintelligible words, reeled on and out of sight.

Miss Harper trembled violently as the Colonel assisted her up the steps.

"I am sorry you were so frightened," he said tenderly, bending over the sofa on which she had thrown herself. "I had no idea Hawthorne drank—he's always been such a steady fellow."

She gave a little hysterical laugh as she motioned him to a seat beside her.

"I am nervous to-night, you see. I've danced too much. I've been so worn out lately with an anxiety about father, and I—"

Her voice broke up into short, quick sobs. She buried her face in her hands as she felt her companion's arm around her, and her head was drawn down upon his breast.

"It will be all right," he said, his deep voice tremulous with a strong man's tenderness. "It shall be all right for you, anyway, Ethel, my darling, if you will let me care for you—as my wife, Ethel."

He went away soon after, with her whispered promise and her shy kisses to transform for him the world upon which the new day was breaking.

As she rose from the sofa she touched something with her foot. It was a plain gold ring, with the one word "Fidelis," engraved upon it.

She had seen it before. It was the wedding ring of Richard Hawthorne's dead mother. She shuddered as she looked over her shoulder at her reflection in the mirror.

The roses were crushed again, but from the loving embrace of the man who had just left her, not the murderous grasp of the one whom she had sent from her to his own destruction.

She grew faint with a vague, horrible fear as she thought of him.

Three days later Colonel Carstairs determined upon a trip to South Africa, in order to give personal supervision to Mr. Harper's mining interests. The financial situation of the great house of Harper and Company was rapidly growing hopeless.

"I am the only one who has held you, and worshipped you—so and so?" he had said to Ethel, with the instinctive jealousy of a lover, crushing her against his broad breast, and kissing her on lips and eyes and shining hair.

"The only one. And if you were not?" she whispered, with a slight laugh.

His arm tightened about her.

"If I were not, that would be hard to bear, but not so hard

as falsehood," he answered, looking closer into the divine eyes.

"I swear it," she said, solemnly. "Now you will never doubt me?"

"Never, never! I never have. I should as soon think of doubting my love for you!"

And so he left her, trusting her.

The house seemed stifling after he had gone. She walked up and down her room trying to reconcile herself to the separation. She had had many "affairs" in the last five years. She had cared a great deal for a good many, or thought she did,

which satisfied them quite as well, until—well, that frightful experience with Richard Hawthorne was only a much intensified form of similar ones.

Her affection for Colonel Carstairs was something of which she had never believed the human heart capable.

"Was it in this way they cared for me?" she thought, with the strangest pang that had ever moved her. "Was it so that Dick cared?"

Her eyes filled with slow, miserable tears, the expression of a cowardly fear that she might some time suffer as she had made others. Her sleep that night was broken by a sudden start and shriek, as she roused from a dream in which a deadly hand was again clutching at her throat, but it was her lover's this time, and beside him stood more than one whose names even she had forgotten.

The midnight express was "making time," a grim satire on the eternity into which men are sometimes plunged as the result of such an undertaking. Colonel Carstairs was the only wide-awake passenger on board. His body was flying through space, but

his spirit was at rest with the only woman he had ever loved with his great, strong heart—his ideal of all loveliness and purity. There was a long, shrill whistle, a quiver through the train, a horrible, deafening crash, and Colonel Carstairs was one of the many flung headlong among the *débris* of a railway wreck.

Fortunately, though terribly shaken, he was unhurt, and worked hard for the relief of those around him. He dragged from under the shattered timbers a young man whose face was covered with blood, surely dead, he thought, as he looked at him. Some of the clothing was torn from the upper part of the body. He felt for the man's heart, and his hand struck against a locket which the force of a blow had driven a little way into the flesh.

There was a faint moan from the wounded man's lips as he removed it, and taking him in his arms, he carried him to one of the beds improvised from the scattered cushions of the train.



He caught her by the throat. She threw up her arms in agony.

It was two hours before other cars came, bringing help for the victims. Colonel Carstairs worked through the time bravely.

"I will take care of you," he said, pausing at last by the side of the man whom he had first helped. Even then he did not recognise him.

"I know you," the man replied weakly, "you are the man—Ethel Harper is going to marry!"

"Richard Hawthorne!" the Colonel exclaimed in astonishment. Lifting him in his arms again, he carried him into the train, and, when they reached the city, to a hotel, where he secured for him the best attention possible.

"I must push on further," he said in leaving him. "I shall be back in two weeks at least, and see how they have taken care of you."

He was twenty miles away before he thought of the locket. He drew it out tenderly. The hinge was broken and the lid fell off. The exquisite, smiling face of Ethel Harper confronted him, but it was stained with blood.

He uttered a quick exclamation as he turned it over and over. He tormented himself with conjectures. Heavens! What did it mean?

At the time specified he returned to the city and the hotel.

"You see I'm all right again," were the first words Hawthorne said to him. "I'm going away to-morrow. Where's Ethel?"

"Ethel?"

Colonel Carstairs looked more closely at him, understanding for the first time what had so puzzled him—the strange look in the splendid black eyes. In such a temperament there is but a step from reason to insanity, and Richard Hawthorne had taken it before he left London.

"Hawthorne," the Colonel said, slowly, sitting down beside him, "you must tell me something. This locket——"

Its owner snatched it eagerly from his hand.

"It's Ethel, you know," he said, his voice trembling with delight at its recovery; "she gave it to me on my birthday." His mood changed suddenly. "She kissed me, too, when she gave it to me—my God! she kissed me! It is not so very long ago—not six months—and now she says it's not worth while to talk about it. She never loved me, she says, though she swore she did six months ago. I thought I had lost it," and with a quiet smile returning to his lips he handled the locket fondly.

The Colonel, rising, crossed the room once or twice, then reseated himself.

"Do you remember the night we met you on——"

"Intoxicated?" Hawthorne interrupted with a short laugh. "Oh, yes, I remember perfectly, though I don't remember much that's happened since. I had never touched a drop before—I'd kept my promise to my mother, indeed I had—but I was wild that night; she made me so. I went to see her before you did. She was dressed for the ball—all in white, like a ghost, you know—and I asked her—I"—he put his hand to his head confusedly—"I asked her to wear my mother's ring. I didn't make her promise anything, but I was afraid of you and others."

"I tried to kill her that night. I don't know just what I did; it was something horrible. It set me on fire here"—and he struck his head savagely—"and I have not been right since. I don't know what is the matter with me. I thought I would go to the Cape."

He put his hands over his eyes with a pathetic sort of helplessness.

Colonel Carstairs turned from him with a low groan.

"There's blood here," Hawthorne exclaimed, catching up the locket again. "That is strange. I didn't kill her—I know I didn't. Oh, I see now," he added, growing quiet again. "It was broken in the accident. You are her father's lawyer. Is he to be a poor man after all?"

"Yes; I can save nothing for him."

"Is it so bad as that?"

"As bad as that."

"Is Ethel going to marry you? She throw me off when I lost my money."

"I shall never marry any woman," his companion answered in a slow, steady tone.

"And Ethel will be alone and poor. Perhaps she will listen to me then. You may keep the locket," he added, pushing it across the table towards him. "I know how her face looks, and I shall see it again."

The Colonel picked up the trinket, then throw it down again.

He had not heard the last sentence, rousing himself from the reverie into which he had fallen to say, "I will see you to-morrow, Hawthorne," and, once in the street, he walked for hours, battling with a pain harder to conquer than any foe he had ever faced.

He went next day to the hotel as he had promised, but Hawthorne's room was vacant. The broken locket in a little box was left in care of the clerk with a note. "I can't wait to see you again. Perhaps Ethel will need me before I can get there."

There was no name, nor need of one.

Ethel Harper was growing pale with long anxiety. "It he would only write or come," was her unceasing thought as the slow days dragged on.

The Colonel had been gone two months. His daily notes had ceased suddenly. There had been an awful accident in South Africa, but the papers made no mention of his name. What could it mean? How could she live longer in such intolerable suspense?

"It is frightful to love like this!" she thought fiercely, as she realised how strong a hold he held upon her life, as she thought with a cold shudder of the possibilities of his death, or his discovery that she was less true than he believed her. And her father was breaking down under the long struggle he had been making.

Failure met him at every turn. He waited with impatience only a little less than his daughter for tidings from Colonel Carstairs.

It had been a dark and stormy day. Ethel Harper stood at the window watching the lamps, early lit, as they flared in the gusts of wind which howled through the street.

Her heart ached with the sharpest pain she had ever known. She had hoped and prayed for a letter by the last delivery, but the postman had gone by on the other side. She thought, with a sick heart, of the long hours before he would make his rounds again. She pressed her burning cheeks against the glass. Her eyes were hot. They hurt her, but no tears came.

She caught her breath as a quick footfall came along the pavement and up the steps. There was a ring at the bell. She was downstairs herself by the time the servant opened the front door, but she started back into the room with a low cry of disappointment as Richard Hawthorne stepped into the hall—Richard Hawthorne, surely, or, at least, the wreck of him—a pale, frenzied-looking man, with blazing eyes and hollow cheeks, scarlet lips that moved but made no sound, clothes soiled and dusty with travel.

"I've come, Ethel," he said, tremulously, after a long, wild look at her. "I've seen Colonel Carstairs somewhere. I don't know just where"—he put his hand to his head again—"and he has told me that your father would be poor, that he couldn't save anything for him, and——"

"Dick Hawthorne," his terrified listener interrupted. "I believe you are insane. How dare you talk to Colonel Carstairs? How dare you come to me?"

"Insane!" the man laughed, slyly; "oh, no! There are plenty of crazy people about. I see them all the time; but I'm all right. Insane? No, indeed! I was afraid I should be once, when you turned from me, Ethel, but you needn't be afraid of me now."

She shrank from him, leaning against the wall, her hand pressed close against her heart.

"To think it was all a mistake," he went on—"that you are not going to marry him after all! He told me so. He——"

"Oh, Dick!" She fell on her knees before him, her hands



"Take him away," she said to the servant. "Quick, take him away."

clenched. "For Heaven's sake, Dick! He never said that! Tell me that he never said it!"

He raised her gently, the fire dying out of his

eyes as he drew her to him; but she broke from him fiercely.

"What does it all mean?" she gasped. "What are you talking about? Why do you come here to torment me, Dick Hawthorne? I told you I was done with you long ago. I told you—"

She shrank and quivered under the look with which he glared upon her.

"But it is different now," he said, with the same fixed stare. "Your father has lost his money. Don't you know? I will take care of you, Ethel. I came back here to take care of you."

"The folly of bandying words with this madman!" she thought, as she struggled to compose herself. "Excuse me, Dick, please, for one moment," she said to him, with the old fascination.

Slipping into the hall she called one of the servants.

"You must get this man out of the house," she whispered quickly—"by force, if need be. He is raving mad! Wait! There is the bell again!"

She watched eagerly as the door opened and Colonel Carstairs, entering the house, passed into the drawing-room.

"Hawthorne!" she heard him say. "I was afraid I should find you here."

She felt sick and faint as she followed him into the room.

"At last—at last!" she cried, springing into his arms, with a great burst of tears. "I have been frightened to death," she sobbed, convulsively; and, raising her face, she pointed to Richard Hawthorne. "Take him away!" she said to the servant—"quick! take him away!"

The man stepped towards him.

Colonel Carstairs disengaged the clinging hands and stood aloof from her like a figure cut in stone.

"Do not lay your finger on him!" he commanded.

"It is Miss Harper's order," the servant replied, though with perfect respect.

The Colonel bowed slightly.

"Miss Harper will allow me to countermand her order—if I can give a better one for mine."

The servant withdrew instantly.

"Hawthorne, my poor, poor boy!"

The tone was one of infinite compassion as the Colonel, approaching him, laid his hand upon the younger man's arm, and with the other brushed away the disordered hair which had fallen over his eyes.

He looked up with a vacant expression. Evidently he had failed to comprehend the meaning of what had just taken place.

"Ethel," the Colonel resumed, turning towards her, "we were together in that awful railway accident. Hawthorne was hurt. I helped him, and I found upon his breast—this! He had worn it night and day since you gave it to him, Ethel."

He laid the locket down before her, broken, blood-stained, and her own face smiled up at her from its ruin.

"I did not know he was coming, too," Hawthorne explained eagerly. "I left it for him. I knew he was fond of you. I was sorry for him, and I gave him that!"

She turned despairingly to the Colonel, her arms outstretched, tears raining over her face.

"Have you nothing to say to me?" she cried, in agony. "Not one word?"

"Nothing."

"You believe this man?"

"Believe him, Ethel!"

"It is a lie!" she shrieked, striking her hands together—"it is an infamous, dastardly lie! How dare you face me with your falsehood?" she demanded, turning again towards Hawthorne; "to come here—"

He caught her hands in both his.

"It is true, my darling—oh, you know it is all true; everything is true, only you have forgotten! Never mind, Ethel; it will be all right by-and-bye! You are coming with me!"

She wrenched her hands away and stepped back from him.

"With you?" she repeated, with infinite contempt—"with you?"

He drew his breath hard. His eyes blazed again. He shook off the hand which the Colonel placed upon his shoulder.

"Not go with me, Ethel?" he muttered through his teeth—"not go with me? Then I'll go alone to perdition."

He drew a pistol from his pocket. There was a flash, a report, and the body of the young man rolled lifeless at the feet of the woman who had destroyed him.

"Mercy! Mercy!" she shrieked wildly, wringing her hands together. "Oh, my love! and you will not help me? You will not believe me? You will not—"

"Hush!" the Colonel said, solemnly, pointing to the prostrate figure, as she fell fainting at his feet. "Your own life has answered you, Ethel Harper! It is too late!"

S. S. Thorpe.

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LOVE PROBLEM No. 9.

A Profitable Investment.

Should a Husband Discuss His Business Affairs
with His Wife?

ALL
YOUNG
COUPLES
SHOULD
READ
THIS
STORY.

"Ada, what is your solicitor's address?"

"My solicitor?" replied Ada Russell, looking up with a surprised air. "Why, he's at Walton House, in Cornhill."

"Your money that he holds is in India Three per Cents., isn't it?"

"Yes, Dick."

"Well, I am thinking of reinvesting it in a more profitable direction; providing, of course, that I have your consent."

"Of course, dear. It is yours as much as mine, and you do what you think best. Where should you invest it?"

"I do not suppose you would be any the wiser if I told you. But still, as it is your money, you ought to be told. I shall invest it in the Blue Creek Diamond Mine."

"Oh, Dick, do you think it is safe?"

"Now, whatever does this little woman think she knows about diamond mines? Don't you worry yourself about business affairs, dear, they are out of a woman's sphere."

They had been married just two months, and you would have to travel far to find a more devoted couple. They occupied a little six-roomed house somewhere in Middlesex, to the north of London. Quite an old-world garden surrounded the house, converting it into an absolute Englishman's castle.

Mr. Russell's pet aversion was the business woman. He took particular care that there were no girls in his department in the City. Woman's sphere, he would argue, is home; man's in the wide world as well as home.

If by any chance a typist or lady clerk came to him with a message or a question he would always courteously listen, but would call up an office boy and give him the answer in front of the girl, thus intending to imply that he did not think a lady clerk was capable of taking a message properly.

I only just mention this instance to show how far his dislike to the business woman carried him. Outside, though, he was all that could be desired, and a truer gentleman never walked the earth. But let a lady friend ask him some business question and he was frozen in a moment.

"Dick," went on Mrs. Russell, "there's one thing in connection with my money that you may not know of. And that is, that Mr. Redford, my solicitor, according to the terms of father's will, must always conduct any business for me; as for instance, an investment."

"H'm!" muttered her husband. "Is that so? That is rather annoying; but, still, I have no doubt he will do as well as I can. I will go and see him this morning, and get him to arrange the investment."

Accordingly, Dick carried out his plan by lunching with Mr. Redford and arranging for the withdrawal of the two thousand pounds from the India Three per Cents.

"I cannot say I much care for this Blue Creek affair," said the solicitor. "But of course if Mrs. Russell is agreeable there is nothing more to be said."

"Mrs. Russell is as anxious as I am to do better with her money; it is only human, isn't it?" he asked, with a laugh.

"Quite so, but I do not think I should have invested in a West African diamond mine. But still, I have no doubt you know more than I do about such matters."

"Well, you see, it is like this, Mr. Redford. I know a man who is connected with the property out there, and he has wired to me of an exceedingly rich find. I can purchase the shares at par now, and they will probably double themselves in a fortnight."

"As you please, Mr. Russell; I only hope you are not too sanguine."

The money was advanced almost immediately, and that same day saw Mrs. Russell possessor of two thousand pounds' worth of shares in the Blue Creek Diamond Syndicate Limited.

It was some three days after this that Mr. and Mrs. Russell were seated by the fire after dinner.

"By the way, Dick, did you use that money as you said you would?"

"Money?" replied her husband in a mystified tone such as he always adopted when a woman spoke to him on any matter which he imagined might be connected with business. "Money, what money? Your dressmaker had a cheque last week if that is what you mean."

"No, Dick. I mean the money you were going to get from Mr. Redford to buy diamond shares with."

"Oh, yes, that is all finished with. Your solicitor is empowered to sign for you, is he not?"

"Yes, Dick. But I think you might have said something to me about it."

"Whatever for, dear? Now what would you know about any such matters?"

"But I like to be told a little about things which concern us both."

"Now, my dear girl, you know my opinion on such matters, and that I dislike you to appear business-like, and try to enter into a field which man alone is fitted to occupy."

"Dick, how bumpitious that sounds. I should like to shake you, you consequential old thing."

That is how similar arguments that they had always ended—Ada in her husband's arms. But, nevertheless, she wished in her heart of hearts that Dick would confide in her a little as to how his business went on, and all that sort of thing. He was a dear, lovable boy, and that fact of his about women and business affairs, she thought, was his only great fault.

Occasionally he would come home looking worried; and then, with her heart overflowing with sympathy, she would say:

"What is the matter, Dick, dear?"

A fleeting smile would cross his face, but it would be gone in a second and his countenance grave and worried again, as he replied:

"Oh, business, dear. Nothing that you would understand."

This would always have the effect of arresting his wife's sympathetic inclinations, and, had he but known, robbing himself of a great deal of helpful comfort, which would have been his had he chosen. But his prejudices were too strong for him, unfortunately.

His prophecy concerning the Blue Creek Diamond Syndicate was verified that same week by the advancement in value of the shares from twenty shillings to twenty-eight shillings, with every prospect of them going higher.

His delight almost led him to tell his wife of the successful speculation; but then, he reflected, it would be rather weak and quite needless to talk business with women.

One can imagine this estimable gentleman (for he was estimable in practically every other direction) saying to himself:

"Poor things, they could not understand such affairs, even if they had it in black and white before their eyes."

Perhaps Mr. Russell is more to be pitied than scorned at. True it is that he appreciated the opposite sex in many ways; but where a woman occupied a post once occupied by a man, or did work that had once been the work of a man, then there were no bounds to his scoffing.

Strange to say, he was one of the most loyal subjects that our late Queen possessed; he never sneered at the head of our Empire being a woman. Like most prejudiced people, he was inconsistent. He never read Charlotte Brontë, Sarah Grand, or George Eliot, simply because they were women who, in his opinion, had usurped the position of men.

Thus it was that Mrs. Russell learnt the good fortune that had attended her husband's investment of her money from quite another source.

Her informant was Mr. Redford, who occasionally dropped in for a cup of tea. He had been her father's greatest friend, and in consequence was privileged. Yet—shame that I should have to set it down—people of the genus Grundy pointed it out to one another, and said it was hardly correct. And they call this a free country, wherein our womenfolk are bound by silken chains to most ridiculous laws laid down by conventionality. And all because of "what people will say!"

Ugh! the very phrase sets one's teeth on edge. And, after all, these esteemed "people" who "will say" are probably the first to break the said laws should the occasion arise. *Honi soit qui mal y pense.*

Both the Russells and Mr. Redford were aware of this, but were only amused at it, and would quote Beaconsfield's famous saying: "They say! What do they say? Let them say!"

"Your two thousand pounds will be largely increased," Mrs. Russell. It was a very fortunate speculation indeed.

"Why, what?" cried Mrs. Russell, "I have not heard anything about it."

"Do you mean to say that your husband has not told you of the shares rising so high?"

"No, he has not said anything about it. Oh, do tell me," she cried, all agog with excitement.

"Well, your husband is mighty reticent," grumbled Mr. Redford. "At any rate, your £2,000 is worth £3,000 now."

"Oh, how lovely, Mr. Redford!" And, rising from her seat, the impetuous Ada performed a light dance in her glee. She was not such a slave to the goddess as this might imply, but most people would feel glad at hearing similar news.

When the solicitor had gone, and the excitement worn off somewhat, it occurred to Ada that Dick might have told her of all this himself. It would certainly have added to the pleasure of it.

"Dick, dear," she said that evening. "You did not say anything about how well the investment had come off."

"No, I know; but how did you hear?" he said; and then in a horrified tone he asked: "You surely have not been reading the market quotations in the newspapers?"

"Oh, nothing so awful!" she laughingly cried, in a mock imitation of her husband's manner. "Mr. Redford told me."

"Oh!" He gave a sigh of relief; she was not trying to be businesslike, after all.

"No, I did not tell you, Ada," he went on. "But I will tell you this, that they will rise to about thirty-five shillings apiece to-morrow."

"Really, Dick! Isn't it wonderful? What luck, to be sure."

Then followed a repetition of their courtship days, which, unlike a number of couples, they had not dropped after marriage.

The following evening the Russells were out to dinner at the house of a well-known financier. Afterwards, in the drawing-room, a lady performed upon the piano with much vigour and the precision of an instruction book, which gave everyone a chance to converse.

Ada Russell was idly turning over some photos, when she suddenly heard the words "Blue Creek." In an instant she was on the alert trying to catch what the speakers were saying. For they were two of the biggest financiers in the City.

"Astonishing the way Blue Creeks have gone up."

"Yes, they will go up more to-morrow, I believe, but then they'll stop."

"I think so too, and am inclined to think they will go down a very heavy drop."

"How about those Can Pacs of yours?"

But Ada had heard enough, and she hurried away to find her husband, but was unable to get alone with him.

"Dick dear!" she said, as they drove home. "Those Blue Creeks are——"

But he interrupted her with a gesture. The very way in which she named the shares sounded so professional that he was up in arms at once.

"My dear Ada, I do not want to discuss stocks and shares with you. I leave that for my male friends."

"But, Dick, they will——"

Again he interrupted her.

"Ada, please do not. You know my objections."

"Oh, very well, Dick!" and she relapsed into silence.

"How absurd it is of him!" she thought; "but he will learn differently some day." But neither knew how near the lesson was that was to teach him differently.

As anticipated, Blue Creeks rose to 37s. 6d., and shares were still being held tightly.

Mr. Russell studied the market carefully, and resolved to hold on. He had some inward misgivings though, and at times almost decided to sell and reap the huge profit he had already made.

But there seemed a chance of gaining still more; and, with the gambler's true instinct, he waited on fortune.

"Been busy to-day, dear?" questioned his wife, as they sat at dinner.

"Yes, very busy. Those shares of yours are keeping me well employed. They are worth nearly double what I paid for them at first," he replied, for once condescending to talk on the forbidden subject in a moment of triumph.

So elated was his wife at getting such a reply to her question, that she went on further.

"Don't you think you had better sell them now you have made so much, Dick?"

Immediately he closed up, and regretted his previous confidence. He had forgotten himself for a moment.

"My dear Ada, while I can I will look after business affairs in connection with us, and you will look after home affairs. I shall not dictate to you as regards your ruling of the domestic department, and I shall expect a similar state of affairs to appertain to my business."

"Oh, Dick, you are a silly old boy. Keep your ridiculous business affairs to yourself if you must. But it would be much more like husband and wife if you confided in me a little more."

Shortly after this there was silence for some time, and the next remark to be heard issued from Ada's lips.

"Dick, you do want a shave!"

From which the thoughtful reader will deduce much.

The following day was Saturday. This day is, in many places of business, quite a farce. Nobody works, or thinks of it, and persons in high places very often do not come up at all. More particularly so is this in Government offices and on the Stock Exchange.

Mr. Russell had elected to remain at home on this Saturday, and, all unconscious of the fate in store for him, sat placidly smoking a pipe in the garden.

Suddenly a telegraph-boy came through from the house: Mr. Russell took the telegram in a nonchalant way, because he very often received wires whilst away from the office.

"Blue Creeks down to one and a quarter; still dropping," he read.

"Good Heavens!" he gasped. "What a fool I was! Why did I not sell?"

Distractedly he rushed into the house, and rapidly made himself presentable. Then, jumping on his bicycle, he rode madly to Mr. Redford's.

Now, most men would have gone to their wives and told the news. But Dick never dreamt of consulting his wife.

"A woman! Pooh, preposterous!" he would have said.

It was just five minutes after one o'clock that he arrived at the solicitor's office, only to find everyone gone. He rang the housekeeper's bell with sufficient force to almost snap the wires.

Presently the old woman appeared, curtseying as she opened the door.

"Mr. Redford, sir. He's been gone this half hour. Gone down to the sea somewhere. I don't quite know where; I'm sure, sir. I think he said Blackpool. He always says there's no such place as Blackpool, not that I think much of it myself; give me——"

Dick cut short her ruminations. His last hope was gone. He could have cried aloud in his vexation. Why had he not taken his wife's advice?

"Jupiter!" he groaned. "What will she say when she hears of it? I suppose they are below par by now; even she advised me to sell."

Slowly he rode home bitterly reviling his luck all the time. If he had sold yesterday he would have raked in £3,750—a clear profit of £1,750—now he did not care even to surmise what they were worth.

In the meantime, Ada was wondering where her husband was until her eyes alighted on the telegram.

Hastily she picked it up, and read it through. Then, instead of a blanched face or shocked expression, a strange smile played about her countenance.

"Poor boy!" she murmured softly.

The "poor boy" was at that moment wheeling his bicycle through the garden, and wondering how he should begin his story.

"Hullo, Dick! Been for a ride?" was his wife's greeting.

"Yes," replied her husband in a doleful tone, and with a suicidal expression.

"Why, Dick, dear. Whatever is the matter?"

"Matter, matter enough!" he replied. "Your two thousand pounds are lost, I am afraid."

"My two thousand pounds?" she cried. "How?"

"Well, Ada, Blue Creeks fell to one and a quarter this morning, and are still falling. I cannot find Redford anywhere; they think he has gone to Blackpool. I do not know how much your shares are worth now—precious little I am afraid," replied Dick, speaking professionally to his wife, so agitated was he.

"Redford ought not to have gone away with the market in the state it is!" he added in a miserable tone.

He sat down and leant his head on his hands, whilst he gazed dejectedly at the ground. Suddenly a pair of soft arms were round his neck, and Ada whispered:

"Dick, old boy, I have been a business woman for once. I heard that Blue Creeks were a bit rocky, and yesterday I got all the financial papers and read them. Then I told Mr. Redford to sell. He sold when they were worth thirty-six shillings each."

She was by his side now, and was looking into his eyes in such a compassionate manner.

"It's all right now, Dick, old boy, so cheer up."

He caught her very close to him, and kissed her passionately. There we will leave them, but not before I tell you that since then there has been a great change in affairs, and no longer does Mr. Russell worry out matters by himself, but has come to believe in the business capacity of woman.

E. Newton Bungey.



Winning a Bride.

A Touching Little Tale.

THE girl was looking out of the window, humming softly, with a fine air

of indifference. The man was leaning his back against the mantelpiece, gloomily observing the points of his boots.

They were good boots, but hardly worth the amount of serious observation he was giving them. To any person of moderate understanding the situation was obvious. To the two actors in it it was becoming embarrassing. The man moved first.

"You are sure your mind is made up, Marjorie?"

The girl stopped humming abruptly and turned round. "What is the use of beginning again?" she said, with an impatient movement. "You know one cannot serve two masters. I am going to give my life to my art."

"But, Marjorie, you know what it means to me. I mean you know I could never change or forget."

practical one of the family, to snatch at the offer of this post? You would have shown more sense in asking Madge or Lilian, and I dare say one of them might have had you."

For a moment there was a dangerous gleam in his eyes, but it changed to a tender look of amusement as the girl flung herself viciously into a chair with the air of a sulky child.

"I suppose it would have been more sensible," he agreed, "only I don't love either Madge or Lilian. If you will only have me," he continued, a twinkle in his eye and abject humility in his voice. "I will do my best to overcome my disgraceful appetite and dine off a sentimental song if you deem it best. I will also look out for some patent shirt fastener which will save you the trouble of sewing on buttons."

Marjorie looked up quickly.

"You needn't try to be funny, Rex!" she said severely. "You know quite well I should have to become a domesticated woman if I married, and I won't. I am going to devote my life to music, and if I were to sacrifice that and marry you I should stop loving you in a fortnight and hate you in a month. There, that's all."

Rex looked up quickly

"Why not?" she returned quickly. "That is just what I wanted to speak to you about. You see"—and her proud head was raised a trifle higher—"you only want a wife who can see that you get a good dinner every day and sew the buttons on your shirts. You have known us all for years. Why do you expect me, the un-

"You would stop loving me in a fortnight?" he asked. "Then I may infer you have begun already?"

"You may infer nothing, sir!" she retorted sharply, but her face was crimson.

"By Jove, that's the nearest I've ever got!" thought Rex. "I believe she does half like me, but must make her cave in before she'll respect me."

There was a moment's pause, then he said gently:

"I beg your pardon, Marjorie, I believe you may be right, after all, though it is hard to think of giving you up." And he sighed softly, but resignedly. "If you are not too angry with me, will you tell me which you think it would be best for me to try to like, Lilian or Madge?"

"I am so glad, Rex, you are sensible at last! Really, I have thought it out carefully, and, though Lilian is awfully sweet and—and everything, I think Madge is the one best suited to you. You see, she cooks splendidly, and knows exactly how everything ought to be done in a house and would be perfectly satisfied if you kissed her once a month or so, and occasionally said the dinner was excellent. She really would, she is so easily pleased. While I— Well, you know what I am."

"Yes, I know what you are," he replied quietly. "You are very young."

She misunderstood him, as he had intended she should, and assented eagerly.

"Yes, I am young—only nineteen—and you are nearly thirty. Madge is nearest you in age, and I believe you could make her love you if you tried."

"Shall I try? Do you want me to?"

"Yes, of course I want you to. It is for your own sake. She would make you a better wife than I because I don't want even to be loved. I am satisfied with my life as it is."

"All right, Marjorie. In a month I shall have made up my mind, and I will tell you. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," she murmured, vaguely afraid of what she had done.

She tried to reason out the cause of her depression, but it seemed to have no cause, and with a lagging step she made her way to the sunny den which she shared with her sisters.

Madge was sitting there alone, sewing and singing gaily. She looked up with a smile, as Marjorie entered, and an unusual merriment danced in her eyes.

"Guess who's been here?" exclaimed Madge.

"Who?"

"Rex. And he's got a box for *The Loves of Henrietta* to-morrow, and he's asked mother and me to go."

"I'm so glad," said Marjorie, but with singular want of enthusiasm.

And Madge stole a furtive look at her, and the corners of her mouth quivered.

A month had passed. Once more Marjorie stood at the same window, softly humming. She was waiting for Rex, and her face was very pale. It was the same face still, but there was a difference—the difference which marks every girl's face when she becomes a woman.

She had learnt her lesson and borne her punishment in silence.

To-day she had nerved herself for a supreme effort that she might do no wrong to the sister who had stepped into the place she had voluntarily resigned.

She had thought love not worth the sacrifice of art, and if art without love had turned to dust and ashes in her hand who was to blame but herself?

She was waiting for Rex—Rex, who had fallen such a helpless victim to Madge that he had had scarcely a look or a word to spare for her the whole month. It was this that had first taught her what she had lost and that had afterwards nerved her to play her part—for a week's experience had taught her that it was only a part—of careless indifference and entire absorption in her art.

When it seemed too hard for her she reminded herself sternly of her own words, "I am satisfied with my life as it is."

"They shall never see I am not satisfied," she said, and struggled on.

To-day there was a set, stern look on her face, for this was

to be the supreme ordeal, and at present there was no one to see her. But as she leant her head listlessly against the window there came from the hall the sound of a familiar whistle, and instantly her expression changed. A smiling, expectant face greeted Rex as he entered, and she scrutinised him with playful anxiety.

"The funeral and wedding marches are side by side on the piano," she began, with an affected attempt at seriousness, "but I was waiting to choose between them till I have seen your face."

"What does my face tell you?" he asked.

She looked at him critically.

"That the momentous question is to be asked no later than this evening," she replied. "Good luck attend you."

"Wrong. Try again."

"Is it possible it is to be postponed till to-morrow morning?" And she held out her hand with a playful gesture of sympathy.

"Wrong again. I see I must tell you."

He had seized the hand she had offered, and was looking her straight in the face.

"What do you say to the question having been asked already?"

The last month had wrought many changes in Marjorie. She had, for one thing, learnt to keep her face under control, and only the slightest trembling of the eyelid showed that she was taken by surprise.

"My dear brother to be," she said, regaining possession of her hand, "I consider I have been grossly ill-treated in having this fact sprung upon me so suddenly. I had heard of a delightful little book called '*The Right Word in the Right Place*'—a help to those people born devoid of tact. I was going to purchase it in the assurance that I should find a paragraph entitled, 'What to say to a future brother-in-law, or words to that effect, and now you pounce upon me like this and crush me. I feel unfit for conversation. You had better go.' And she turned majestically away.

"I will. Only you must first allow me to make one remark. You did not ask what Madge said to me." He paused impressively. "She has refused me."

It was his trump card, and he was growing desperate. He took advantage of Marjorie's back being still turned towards him, and, creeping softly behind her, took one glance at her face before she knew he had moved. It was enough.

"Marjorie," he cried, "hasn't the play gone far enough? I am tired of acting, and I want you. Marjorie—I can't tell you how much I want you!" There was passionate intreaty in his voice.

"What did you mean," she asked slowly, "by saying you were 'tired of acting'?" "I don't understand."

"No; I know," he answered guiltily. "I've got to tell you. Madge and I have been playing at being lovers during the last month. I have even asked her to marry me, and she has refused. It was the natural climax to the play, she said, and she told me to do it, because nothing else would put you off your guard. I had to know whether you loved me or not," he ended desperately.

"It was very cruel," she whispered at last.

"Ah, Marjorie, don't!" he intreated. "I thought of that, but, honestly, would you ever have known you loved me if we had gone on in the same old way?"

There was a moment's silence.

"I should never have known I loved you," she answered softly.

Charles Herrow.

To Story Writers.

We shall be pleased to consider complete novelettes of about 20,000 words in length, and to pay cash down for those accepted. Manuscripts must be type-written (or very legibly hand-written), and should be sent to the Editor, *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Postage for return of MSS., if unsuitable, should be inclosed.



Silence was Golden.

MOTHER: "I'm surprised at you! Couldn't you tell he was going to kiss you?" Daughter: "Yes, ma, but there was no one for me to tell, except him, and he knew it already."

Jealous Little Wench.

EMILY: "I've got an invite to a charity ball, but I haven't the least idea what I am to go in. What would you wear, Fanny, if you had my complexion?" Fanny: "A thick veil."

Not Always.

ALBERT: "All the world loves a lover, you know." Mildred: "You wouldn't say that if you had heard papa's remarks when he found, yesterday morning, that you had taken his hat by mistake."

Another Sad, Sad Story.

"I MUST confess to you," he said, in a burst of confidence, "I'm an odd man. I'd like to be different if ——" "This is so sudden!" she cried, throwing herself upon his neck. For she, too, was odd, and she had longed to be even.

He Didn't Mean It.

NEVER use swell words. It may not always be agreeable. "How do you like my boots, love?" exclaimed a youthful bride. "Oh, they're immense," replied the partner of her joys, and she had the first matrimonial fainting fit as the result.

Auntie Was Sarcastic.

"I SAW him kiss you just before he was leaving," said the sour-visaged aunt, and she said it in a regular dull-thud tone. "Yes, auntie." "Well, I can realise that it would be the last thing he would think of," and she sailed out as though she had scored every possible point.

He was Mystified.

"GOODNESS, we'll miss the opera," she said impatiently. "We've been waiting a good many minutes for that mother of mine." "Hours, I should say," he replied, somewhat acrimoniously. "Ours?" cried she, rapturously. "Oh, George, you do surprise me." Then she fell on his neck.

A Practical Youth.

"Do you appreciate poetry?" asked the serious girl. "Yes, indeed," answered Mr. Softy. "There's one piece of poetry that has done me a world of good. Old as I am, there are times when I couldn't tell how to calculate without saying 'Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November.'"

A Roar—But Not of the Ocean.

IT was the morning after their arrival at a seaside resort. "I have often heard of the roar of the ocean," she said dreamily, "but I never knew it sounded like that." "That's not the roar of the ocean," answered her more experienced husband; "that's the roar of a departing visitor who has just been presented with his bill."

From Different Points of View.

HE (sentimentally): "I wish I were a star." SHE: "I wish I were one, too!" HE: "May I dare to guess why?" SHE: "Because it is known that every star is millions of miles away from the next one."

Was He Accepted?

HE (at the club reception): "Are you a member of this club?" SHE: "No; only married people belong." HE: "Then suppose we organise a trust for the purpose of making each other eligible."

Very Probably.

HEWITT: "Girls like to make a fellow think they have known a good many fellows, and have had a lot of attention from them." JEWETT: "Right you are. I suppose that when Adam first kissed Eve, she said, 'You men are all alike.'"

A Good Result.

MR. MILKSOP: "I do trust, Maud, you will forgive me, but I'm going to carry off your sister Vera. At your party last night she consented to marry me." Maud: "Forgive you, indeed! Why, of course I will. That's what the party was for."

Bad Taste.

PUFFER: "My dear, I wish you would select a box of cigars for me while shopping to-day." Mrs. Puffer: "Why, I thought you gave up smoking a week ago?" Puffer: "So I did, and if you select the cigars it will help me to resist temptation."

The Banns Are Up.

"I've thought of a capital *nom de plume*," said Henry, who sometimes writes for the newspapers. "What is it?" asked Henrietta. "'Will U. Marrimee.'" "Why, of course I will, you goose!" she answered. "Is that what you have been trying to say so long?"

His Love was Dying.

LOTTIE: "I'm afraid Fred doesn't care for me as much as he did." Edith: "Nonsense! What makes you think so?" Lottie: "I got a letter from him to-day, and there were at least three places where he might have put in a 'dear' or a 'darling' and didn't."

Well Instructed.

HER head rested on his shoulder, and her little hand lay confidingly in his. "Tell me, Alfred," said the happy maiden, "how you ever came to pick me out as the girl you wanted to marry." "Well, Dora," replied the ecstatic young man in a gush of confidence, "it was mother that put me up to it."

His Excitement was Damped.

MRS. DE FASHION (before the full-length portrait of a girl): "Oh, if I only knew the painter of this!" Artist (stepping forward joyfully): "Permit me, madam, to introduce myself as the painter." Mrs. de Fashion: "What extraordinary good luck! Now you will tell me—won't you—the address of the dressmaker who made this girl's frock?"

Only a Little Encouragement.

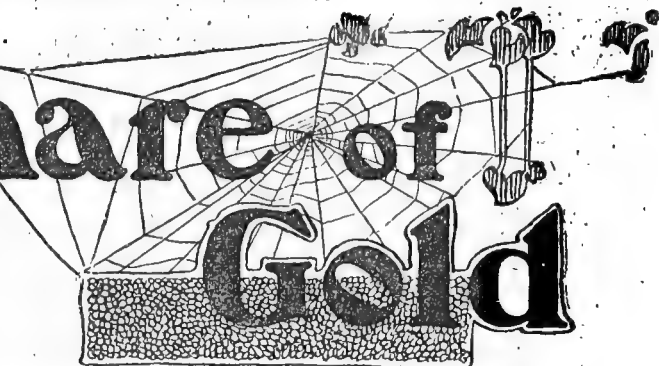
"HAS my daughter, sir," demanded the stern father, "ever given you reason to think she would listen to a proposal of marriage from you?" "Well," said the young man, twirling his hat in his hand in an embarrassed manner, "except that she calls me 'darling,' and always kisses me when I bid her good-night, I can't say that she has."

Good at Teaching.

"CAN'T I teach you to love me, Miss Genevieve?" pleadingly asked the young man. "I fear not, Mr. Spoonamore," she answered. "Then won't you please teach me how to teach you to love me?" he insisted eagerly. This appealed to the essentially masculine element more or less latent in every woman, and she promised to take it under consideration.

GRAND SERIAL STORY.

The Snare of Gold



A Tale of Love, Ambition, and Crime.

... BY ...
HENRY T. JOHNSON.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS SPLENDID STORY ARE:

- GEORGE GELDART, a former prosperous City merchant, supposed to be dead, and now known as "Old Mystery."
ERIC GELDART, his elder son, who conspired to kill his father, thereby coming into his property. He is elected as an M.P.
RONALD GELDART, the younger son, who has been disinherited because he has been falsely accused of robbing his father, whom he has cheated in business, and who plots with Eric to murder him.
CLARE ARMITAGE, the adopted sister of the two brothers, and who is betrothed to Eric.
BOANERGES BLADGON, the traitorous partner of old Geldart, whom he has cheated in business, and who plots with Eric to murder him.
SAMSON SCRIMSHAW, company promoter, who befriends "Old Mystery."
MR. STANYER, an Australian financier, who gives "Old Mystery" the post of English agent for his business.
MADELEINE LORRAINE, daughter of Lord Lynton, who loves and is beloved by Eric Geldart.
PHYLLIS DAVENTRY, typewriter to Scrimshaw, who takes a fancy to "Old Mystery." She is rescued from Hooligans by Ronald Geldart.
JACK WIDDICOMBE, cousin to the brothers Geldart. His story is told below:

TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Ronald Falls on his Feet.

"Some years ago, I had happened to hear of a poor little chap, who got left rather severely; no father, no mother, no home to speak of. I set the little chap going, rigged him out, got him a berth in a firm of brokers I dealt with. Well, he was as smart as paint, went on by leaps and bounds, spread his wings and soared; type of man who pops up every now and then in the city of London, astounding everybody; everything he touches turns to gold, everybody's frantic to deal with him.

"Sometimes that type of man, after going up like a rocket, comes down like the proverbial stick; but this man's still soaring. We met by chance one night at a club; he rushed at me. How was I doing, where had I been, why had he never been able to find me, where was I living?

"When he learnt that I was not absolutely on my bottom dollar, because I hadn't that bottom dollar left, and that it was extremely problematical where I was going to sleep that night or breakfast in the morning, well, the chap was perfectly delighted."

"Delighted?" exclaimed Ronald.

"Yes; don't you see it was his turn to score. He drove me home to his place, insisted on my putting up there for the night,

and in the morning he produced a slip of paper with a lot of figures, all yellow, they were so old. But that slip, Ronnie, contained an account of every fiver, every sovereign, I may say every shilling I had let that chap have, when he was a youngster, to set him on his legs.

"Since then this fellow had trafficked in hundreds of thousands, yes, in millions; I've heard people say of him that he lived on figures, ate them, drank them, dreamt them, breathed them, that his whole life was one huge calculation, that he'd ceased to be human and had become an arithmetical machine, but he's kept that little account by him all this time, and he hadn't forgotten, at all events, one old friend."

"Bravo!" said Ronald; "clever men are not always necessarily bad ones!"

"No, but there was never a clever man who succeeded who hadn't hard things said about him, but this chap was as good as gold, better than gold."

"Serve you right," said Ronald.

"Of course," cousin Jack went on, "I pooh-poohed the whole idea of the thing being a matter of account; his father had been a pal of mine, and after all, what I'd done was only a mere bagatelle, but he wouldn't look at it in that light. I'd put him on his legs, he insisted on putting me on mine; and he did.

"He pitchforked me into the management of one of his concerns, then another; sent me out to the States over one matter of business; to the Cape about another. I've been to Russia; I've been dodging about to St. Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna, Paris; nearly every capital of Europe on his business, and I've made a bit of brass, Ronnie, aye! your poor old cousin Jack, although your amiable brother Eric used to say that I should never make a shilling.

"Now I'm bossing the business arrangements of the Meteor, and incidentally, my dear old chap, what can I do for you?"

"You're very kind," said Ronald, "and frankly, I shall be grateful if you can help me to help myself."

"Of course I will. And so you've been sending us copy? Well, I'm not going to hold out false hopes; now don't be downhearted; something I'll do for you, that goes without saying, but in the way of contributions we've booked the best men to be got, and though we've had tons of applications from outside, we've only struck one man worth his salt; mind you, he's a flyer—an unknown man, too—named Harvey Bligh."

Ronald Geldart let fall his knife and fork and sat upright.

"What's up? Bolted something?" asked cousin Jack.

"Here, have a glass of wine."

"Harvey Bligh, did you say?"

"Why, yes, Carnforth's raving about him; a man with an entirely new style—all grip and mustard; we're writing him to-day for an appointment."

"To what address?"

"Somewhere in your neighbourhood, Bloomsbury Square



—dashed if the number doesn't sound like yours! Do you know anything about the chap?"

"Why, cousin Jack," said Ronald, taking a deep breath and stretching his hand across the table, "I am the very chap; my *nom de plume* is Harvey Bligh."

This time it was cousin Jack who sat breathless, and when he had recovered respiration he said, gripping Ronald's hand heartily:

"I knew it, I knew it all along. When your dear dead dad used to hold forth about Eric's prospects, I said to him many a time, 'Ronnie's the colt to carry my money,' and so you are. The other chap's got push and cheek and they'll carry a man a long way, but you've got better—you've got grit and talent. Come along and see the boss!"

Ronald went. Mr. Carnforth was not only in but visible, and Mr. Carnforth, too, had lunched and was well disposed towards the world in general.

Yes, Mr. Bligh's stories were just the thing they wanted; up-to-date, with characters that lived and breathed, incidents that happened every day and plots interwoven with the current questions of the hour.

And Ronald left that office with a cheque for his story appearing next day in the first number of the *Meteor*, and with a commission to write a serial on similar lines. He was in the seventh heaven of delight.

"We are going to do big things," were Carnforth's last words; "we are as taut and clipper-built a boat as ever put to sea. The smartest men and women of the day in every walk of life have signed on with us. We mean to be the voice and mentor of the world; in high finance, high politics, and high Bohemia we mean to reign; we have the best of the old, and we mean to get the best of the new; we know we have found a diamond in Mr. Harvey Bligh."

For cousin Jack had promised to respect his cousin Ronald's resolution to preserve the incognito he had chosen, and to know him henceforth only by his *nom de plume*.

So Ronald left the offices with a lighter heart than he had known for many months. It was a double-barrelled joy, for he was quite as pleased to learn of cousin Jack's good luck as of his own, and, returning to Mrs. Skimper's, he announced his arrival with so exuberant and rollicking a rat-tat-tat-Tat! that Mrs. Skimper, in the act of ladling the soup, gave a start which ruined the chances of a second appearance of that tablecloth, and caused Arethusa, ascending from the regions below, to break her second plate that day, much to her sorrow.

When Mrs. Skimper and her paying guests discovered that it was only Mr. Harvey Bligh on his return the good lady's expression changed from alarm to severity; and Mr. Springle audibly whispered to Mr. Grimmae that some folks had brass of one kind or not of another.

But this remark went wide, its object being oblivious even of the very existence of Messrs. Springle and Grimmae.

"I'm sorry I'm late, Mrs. Skimper," he said genially, "but I've been detained on business."

"You're too late for soup, Mr. Bligh," said that lady as coldly as possible. But her iciness melted before the youngster's bright, beaming expression, and she added, more good humouredly: "But you are in time for fish."

"Oh, thanks," said Ronald, "but give me very little; I lunched rather well."

"Whereabouts?" asked Springle. "At the Hotel Cecil?" with a sniggering glance at Mr. Grimmae.

"Why, how did you know?" asked Ronald. "Were you there? Anyway, you've guessed it." Then to Miss Amaranth:

"I saw that new symphony 'Réve Extatique' in a shop window and I bought it for you, if you'll accept it."

And, somehow, Mrs. Skimper in her heart of hearts felt that Mr. Harvey Bligh's account was as good as settled. And she was glad.

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Wrong Must Be Righted.

THE more or less select suburb of Brixwell was agitated to its core. The excitement created by the sudden dissolution, sweeping like a gale over the United Kingdom, on reaching Brixwell, swelled into a hurricane. Party spirit was running high, other spirits in certain clubs and public houses were running freely, for a bombshell had burst upon the community.

For some considerable time the borough had been assiduously "nursed" by that eminent financier, philanthropist and sportsman, Mr. Sampson Scrimshaw, who had been generally regarded as the accepted candidate in the interests of that numerically small but tremendously active party the "Pro-Cons," and to that end Mr. Scrimshaw had manifested the deepest interest in Brixwell and all that therein was.

He had laid foundation stones, opened bazaars, taken the chair at lectures and smoking concerts, patronised cricket clubs, football clubs, ping-pong clubs, goose clubs, and kindred institutions, and lost no opportunity of impressing upon Brixwell that it was, in his deliberate and candid opinion, a model community, and that the furtherance of its interests formed the principal object of Mr. Scrimshaw's existence.

And now, Brixwell suddenly discovered that the man it needed sojourned within its very gates.

It had been some time finding it out, indeed it had on former occasions pooch-pooched Blagdon and his pretensions as impossible and presumptuous; but a change had come over the spirit of its dream from the very moment when that brilliant and promising young politician, Eric Geldart, M.P., came down to Brixwell and met the councillors of the Progressive Conservative Association in quiet conclave.

It was then that the fiat went forth. "Blagdon for Brixwell!" was to be the battle-cry of the "Pro-Con." party, and Scrimshaw and all his works were renounced, he himself being openly scoffed at by the powers that were in Brixwell as an interloper.

It was at the same meeting arranged that a deputation should wait upon Boanerges Blagdon, Esq., and inform him that it was the unanimous desire of that association that he should become their Parliamentary representative.

Of course all these things were undreamt of at the Laurestinas, Mr. Blagdon's residence, notwithstanding that a hasty spring clean was on that identical day instituted.

Boanerges Blagdon assured that deputation on its arrival that he had never been so utterly surprised in his life, that nothing was further from his mind than to intrude himself upon the attention of any of his fellow-citizens, more especially when they happened to be such tried and valued friends as Podger, Wiggles, Smith, and others he beheld before him.

Still he took some pains to impress upon them that if they really required him his services were at their disposal, and when that deputation had departed, Blagdon, the personification of the respectable and Brixwell's potential M.P. to be, danced a very ungraceful imitation of the sailor's hornpipe, greatly to the alarm of the wife of his bosom, who, entering at the moment, was seized with an appalling suspicion that he had all of a sudden given way to drink.

Late that night Boanerges Blagdon, to cool his heated brow, took a walk along the pleasant tree-lined road in the outskirts of Brixwell wherein his house was situate, his mind full of the triumph awaiting him in the near future.

He would win the election, that was almost certain, for the late member, a valetudinarian, had been on the verge of resigning just before the dissolution, and no one else had been put forward by his party, who had indeed made overtures towards an amalgamation with the "Pro-Cons."

Yes! ere a month was over, ere he was a month older, and while he was still in the prime of life, he would be standing at the Speaker's chair shaking hands with the first commoner in Britain, and taking his seat amid the cordial cheers of his party.

That would be only the beginning of his glory, that would be the standpoint from which he would start Life's race afresh, developing powers and resources which would astound

those who having known him for years, yet had really never known him.

How different it all might have been if—but no, he would not think of that, would not contemplate what might have been, but what was—he heaved a sigh of thankfulness—could never be, and he wiped a cold bead of perspiration from his forehead that the chill night air had touched with a sudden icy finger.

But, strive as he might, the haunting thought would recur. What if George Geldart had discovered that false entry in the books a few days earlier? What if Geldart had lived? Why, then he, Blagdon the potential M.P., might have been toiling in chains at Portland, for Geldart was a stern man, and, though by nature trustful, once deceived a stern and unrelenting one. And Boanerges Blagdon was a coward.

But George Geldart was dead and buried, the secret buried in the grave with him, save for Eric Geldart, whom it affected equally with Blagdon, Eric who would not split for the sole sufficient reason that he dared not.

Dead men tell no tales—he turned within the gateway of his house—and, Oh, God, there in the flickering light of the lamp overhanging it, he gazed across that gate upon—

George Geldart's face and form! Yes, there was no mistaking it, it was no creature of a disordered brain, George Geldart stood before him in his habit as he lived, raised one warning, extended arm, one accusing finger.

"What do you want with me? Who are you? For God's sake leave me!" he gasped, trembling in every limb, holding to the cross-bar of his gate and sinking nearly to his knees. And in the silence of the night the thing answered him—in a whisper:

"I will leave you when the wrong is righted. As for this foolery—beware, remember the higher the pedestal the greater the shame when all the world shall know."

"I'll right—the wrong. Mercy—I'll—I'll—" His

chattering teeth clenched rigidly together, his tongue was terror-tied, he could speak no more, with dilated eyes he looked up—It was gone!

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Voice from the Dead.

BUT it must have been a dream, a hallucination, the product of over-strained nerves and over-worked brain. That was what Boanerges Blagdon kept saying to himself for the next few days. He said nothing of it to anybody else, not even to Eric Geldart, his partner, though he surprised the latter once or twice by strange, sudden speeches.

"Eric, I sometimes think I can't go through with this. My heart's queer, I know, and—I say, Eric, I suppose there's no chance of anything coming to light about—you know."

"Of course not. What on earth's the matter with you? Look here, you'd better get away to Brighton for a day or two, you want toning up, man, your liver's wrong, you'll be all right in a day or two."

"I wish I had your nerve. I—I don't think you'd turn a hair if—if—"

"If what?" the other exclaimed angrily and impatiently.

"If," Boanerges lowered his voice to a whisper—"if the old man stood before you."

"What do you mean?" snarled the younger man, showing his clenched teeth. "Look here, if you're going to play the fool, you'd better chuck it before the campaign commences."

"No, no, I don't want to play the fool, I'll go right through with it if it kills."

"Well, then, don't talk like an idiot, or act like one. As to what you will keep harping on, why can't you let it all alone? Let the dead past bury its dead. Look here, Boanerges, what's done is done and can't be undone, neither

(Continued overleaf.)

HOLLOWAY'S PILLS

THE
FAMOUS
HOUSEHOLD
REMEDIES.

THE PILLS

have gained their wonderful reputation by sheer force of merit, because every person who uses them recommends them to others. They have positively no equal for thoroughly cleansing the system and putting the liver and kidneys in functional order, without pain or griping. They are the best known remedy for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dizziness, and the common condition of ill-health, known as "run-down" or "out of sorts." Females of every age find Holloway's Pills an invaluable remedy and aid.

THE OINTMENT

is known throughout the world as positively the best and quickest remedy for Bad Legs, Old Wounds and Sores, and Skin Eruptions of every kind, and should be used in conjunction with the Pills. It is also the speediest remedy for Rheumatism, Lumbago, Pains and Stiffness in the Limbs and Joints, Backache, &c. For pains and Soreness at the Chest, and for Throat and Lung Complaints arising from Cold or Weakness, Holloway's Ointment affords most welcome relief in a very short time.

A
COMPLETE
DISPENSARY
IN
THEMSELVES.

AND OINTMENT



you nor I would if we could undo it. Now, henceforth, once for all, on that matter, silence."

"Yes, yes!" said Blagdon, "we'll talk of something else."

I say, Eric, I am certain I saw Ronald yesterday as I was driving down the Strand, he hasn't left the country after all."

"Let him do as he pleases," said Eric, swinging his key-chain, and then "he—he can't harm us."

But he spoke the words a trifle uneasily, and somehow he would rather have heard that his brother was at the other end of the earth or, better still, at the bottom of the sea.

"He was looking rather seedy and rather down in the mouth," said Blagdon, "and he'd taken off his moustache, but I'm certain it was he."

"Perhaps; one or two people tell me much the same. Well, Boanerges, you know the proverb, 'the way of the transgressor is hard.'"

Then they went out to lunch, for Boanerges' first meeting in the Brixwell Town Hall was fixed for that night, when he was to be proposed and seconded and confidence was to be voted in him by his supporters, all of which had been arranged by the Council of the Pro-Cons. under the guiding hand of Eric Geldart, and, as Eric said, it was above all things necessary that he should keep his pecker up.

Whether thanks were due to Eric Geldart or not, certainly Boanerges Blagdon appeared before his supporters that night in the very pink of condition for a parliamentary candidate. His rotundity of face and form were accentuated with the portentousness of one possibly destined to control the destinies of Empire.

The Brixwell Town Hall was crammed, of course political opponents insinuated rather it was "packed," but the supporters of Blagdon were palpably in an overwhelming majority though there were not wanting a few dissentients who raised calls for Scrimshaw and made pertinent inquiries as to who had "burked" him and why he had been "muzzled."

These calls the Progressive-Conservatives as a body received with indignant counter-cries of "Order! Order!" and at the back of the hall was congregated a more or less goodly leaven of the opposition candidate's supporters, predisposed to turbulence and shockingly irreverent.

Eric Geldart, M.P., self-sufficient and all important, occupied the chair, acknowledging, with just sufficient, but not too much geniality, the ovation accorded him as one of the earliest newly elect.

The most prominent men in Brixwell, or, to quote Blagdon himself, "the cream of the intellect, culture, patriotism, and substantiality," were present on the platform and in the front seats. There was also a sprinkling of politicians and professional platform speakers, men accustomed to address audiences of all kinds and denominations from a Hyde Park mass meeting to an Irish hillside gathering.

Eric Geldart introduced the candidate to the supporters, claiming for him a fair and patient hearing, and then amid an artillery of cheers and a musket fire of handclaps, Boanerges Blagdon deliberately and stolidly rose, advanced to the chairman's table, filled himself a glass of water, took out and unlit his gold hunter, took a note of the time, laid the watch on the chairman's table, and, clasping his hands in the small of his back, his right leg erect, and his left foot a trifle advanced, he said:

"Mr. Chairman, free and independent electors of this important and enlightened borough." This was the beginning, and he said a lot more.

He said of course that it was and had been for any years the most cherished wish of his heart to devote himself, if deemed worthy, to the parliamentary representation of that particular borough above all other constituencies in the United Kingdom. They all do that, and it invariably gets a cheer.

He said he meant to fight this election with fairness and courage. This also is certain to have a round of applause.

He then went on to hold up to the execration of his audience the personalities, the actions, and the utterances of his opponents.

He next proceeded to intimate the glorious era of prosperity and progress, in fact a miniature millennium which would for Brixwell follow his own election, and to warn his hearers against the slough of social, political, religious, and moral Despond into which the election of his opponent would most inevitably plunge them.

Attempts were made from the back of the hall to interrupt him as when one gentleman inquired, "How about the council secret syndicate?" "What did yer buy Slammer's Rents for?" "What did yer get compensation?" "What price land-grabbing on Grey Duck Green?"

These interruptions, however, were sternly discountenanced by the chairman, the originators being in many instances persuaded out of their contumacy, and also out of the building, by a bevy of short-haired, square-jawed, broad-shouldered gentlemen in the vicinity of the back doors and incidentally referred to by the promoters of the meeting as "the boys."

Mr. Blagdon, beaming profusely and complacently, having resumed his seat, amid an uproar of cheers, and with what were erroneously described by the reporters as "musical honours," the chairman stated that if any gentleman had questions to put, Mr. Blagdon would, now that he had finished his speech, be most happy to answer them fairly, squarely, and candidly.

There was, however, some hesitancy on the part of questioners in coming forward, most of the putters of inconvenient questions having been incontinently put out previously, the most awkward questioners, moreover, having been charged with disorderly behaviour.

One individual arose in the body of the hall, holding several sheets of foolscap, and announced his fell intention of putting a number of interrogatories, each of which apparently comprised a couple of sheets, but the Chairman promptly ruled him out of order, intimating that if he wanted to make his own speeches he had better hold his own meeting.

A few desultory questions were fired in a half-hearted manner from here and there, inquiries as to the candidate's views on compulsory vegetarianism, the taxing of cats, free telephones, and so on, and the Chairman, having hammered for order, was about to call upon their esteemed friend, Mr. Mugwaddle, to propose a vote of confidence in Boanerges Blagdon, Esq., as the Progressive-Conservative candidate for the borough of Brixwell, when, from a dimly-lighted corner, close to the doorway at the back of the hall, there came clear and distinct—a voice—at the sound of which Eric Geldart looked up with amazement in his eyes.

"Mr. Chairman, Sir, I desire to put one question to the candidate and yourself."

"Too late," said Eric, nervously clutching his chairman's hammer.

But from the opposing element came a clamour. "No! No! The question! The question! You've challenged questions! Stick to your guns!"

And even the candidate's supporters chorussed tolerantly: "Let him put the question."

"Very well, then," answered Eric, half-angrily, half in the tone of one seized with a strange foreboding; while Blagdon, for his part, his hand shading his eyes, peered through the distance into that dimly-lighted corner at the end of the crowded building, that mist looming over the horizon of the sea of faces.

Then in the hush following Eric Geldart's words, there came right across the hall in clear, incisive, strident tones, these words:

"I want you to tell this meeting, where would Boanerges Blagdon be and where would you be—if George Geldart—had—not—died!"

There was a silence, a murmur, for as he listened to the words the Chairman's face turned livid white, his eyes dilated, and his breath came and went in deep gasps. Half rising from his seat he cried hoarsely:

"What does it mean? Who is it dares to ask that question?"

Where is he? Let him stand forth. Where is the man? Who is the man?" And he turned, fierce of face and tone towards his partner and his colleague, Boanerges Blagdon.

The murmur of the audience rose and swelled into almost a clamour of sensation. For Boanerges, who had been sitting gazing rigidly towards the distant door, with eyes dilating wide and wider yet, and cheeks turning from red to crimson, from crimson to purple, and with the big blue-black veins standing out like knotted cords upon his shiny, big, bald forehead, groaned stertorously, extending one trembling hand:

"It was there—there—I saw—it—I saw it again—it's gone—vanished!" Then dropping his arms, falling heavily back in his chair, he rolled over and crashed down chair and all on to the platform boards amid the panic of his affrighted supporters.

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Rescue on the River.

THE collapse of Boanerges Blagdon and his meeting caused consternation in the Pro-Con. camp, and corresponding jubilation in the ranks of the other party.

The newspapers on the following morning vibrated with the accounts of this "Dramatic Incident at a Political Meeting," "Sensational Scene on an Election Platform," and all kinds of reports and rumours filled the air.

Blagdon had been threatened by a mysterious stranger with prosecution; he had been accused of murder by someone in the audience, who had mysteriously disappeared. The *Brixwell Clarion*, representing the Yellow Press of that suburb, gave pages to it.

Whatever the origin or true inwardness of the incident, one thing was certain: Boanerges Blagdon, despite the indignation of his council and his supporters, and regardless even of the scorn of his partner, the member for Claverton, as resolutely as he was able to do anything in his then condition, finally and irrevocably expressed his determination of retiring from the contest.

Mrs. Blagdon, good worthy soul, to whom her Boanerges was far more than political power, fame, or anything else, supported him, but the Brixwell Pro-Cons. asked each other blankly, what was to be done?

It was at this critical juncture that Mr. Sampson Scrimshaw returned to the scene.

His first move was to remind Eric Geldart of the little financial matter outstanding between them in respect of "differences," impressing upon him that money was very tight in the City and that he himself was being harassed by innumerable calls.

The effect of this was to bring Eric Geldart to Crosby Square in a hurry, with the result that within twenty-four hours Sampson Scrimshaw, Esq., had been nominated as candidate for the Parliamentary representation of Brixwell, and the Pro-Con. Council were working for him with all its might and main. For Eric Geldart put it to his partner:

"As you won't, or can't, shake off your mortal funk we may as well square the bucket-shop man this way as any other. It would be rather awkward for him to cut up rough just now. Lynton's in rather a tight place for money, and I want to see if Scrimshaw can't do something for him."

"Then how do you stand in? You don't do much for nothing, Eric."

Geldart laughed.

"I play my game."

Which was quite true, and he played to win, hampered by no scruples. But in Sampson Scrimshaw he met a man as cool and calculating as himself, and one who never showed his hand until he made the trick.

Each meant to make a catpaw of the other—who prevailed will be set down hereafter; suffice it at this stage to say that

(Continued overleaf.)

Born in 1798. Dancing in 1903.

At a ball the other day, so it is stated on excellent authority, a Greek Officer named Colonel Mavroyeni, who was born in 1798, and has therefore lived in three centuries, led his granddaughter in the first dance. He is still in the enjoyment of excellent health and his digestion is apparently as strong as that of a young man, which indeed goes without saying, for the agility of limb and buoyancy of spirit indicated by this remarkable feat are blessings rarely enjoyed by those past middle life and never by the man who can't digest his food. The incident is remarkable only for its rarity. But why should it be rare?

To be lithe of limb and light of heart; at seventy to possess the faculties of mind and body unimpaired, that is life indeed. Yet rarely as it is experienced, it is within the reach of all except deformed and crippled persons. Attention to the laws of health, moderation and care in the selection of diet, and a timely use of the root and herb tonic, Mother Seigel's Syrup, whenever the stomach, liver and kidneys show signs of over work or disorder—that is the secret of perennial youthfulness. When digestion fails, life ebbs. Mother Seigel's Syrup helps digestion, it makes food nourish and rebuild your body, that is the reason of its world-wide popularity and success in curing indigestion, biliousness, constipation, anæmia, and all the host of weakening and distressing ailments that arise from faulty action of the stomach, liver or kidneys.

A striking instance of the power of Mother Seigel's Syrup to cure, when ordinary medicines have miserably failed, is afforded by the case of Mr. Benjamin Stoker. For eight years he was ill, and for half that time unable to work. He suffered from gall-stones and acute indigestion. The Doctor said it was cancer of the stomach, but time proved he was wrong. Violent pains at the pit of the stomach made his life almost unbearable. He says: "The pain never left me and if I tried to eat anything I was sure to be sick. I suffered fearfully from headaches and dizziness. I spent pounds on medical advice, and the uselessness of it all made me feel so hopeless and low-spirited that I did not care whether I lived or died. The Doctor told my wife to be prepared for the worst. He could do no more for me."

"This was my condition when my wife determined to try Seigel's Syrup. I had not much faith in it but to please her began taking it. Well the result was little short of a miracle. Before I had finished one bottle I felt easier; and as I continued taking it the pain and sickness left me and I began to recover my lost health. Slowly I regained strength and after four bottles was able to go back to work. I am now as well as ever in my life, can eat anything, and do a hard day's work, all owing to Seigel's Syrup." If confirmation of a statement at once so explicit and convincing is needed, it may be had from Mr. Edward Tulip, a Lay Preacher in Clavale Colliery, Ryton-on-Tyne, who has known Mr. Stoker intimately for over sixteen years and vouches for the accuracy of his statements.

Attractive Girls.

Attractive girls are not all made on one pattern. Oh, no, their charms are as varied as their faces, and the particular grace or charm that captivates one man, leaves his brother untouched. But most men will admit that the languid, dejected, sallow-faced girl, whose every movement and action betokens indigestion, constipation, or anæmia, is less attractive than her more favoured and healthful sister, who having discovered the secret that bright eyes, clear skin, and a perfect complexion are attributes of sound health and thorough digestion, has preserved all her charms inviolate by a prudent and timely use of that best of all female medicines, Mother Seigel's Syrup. So it is, that the "Seigel" girl is always admired for her beauty, vivacity, and buoyant healthfulness.



honourable member for Little Claverton.

It was just at this time that the *Meteor* burst upon the public and took the town by storm. Its success was instantaneous and phenomenal; there was scarcely a dull line in it from title to imprint.

The self-elected high priests and priestesses of the lighter literature, the would-be celebrities with their own puff-paragraphs and home-made snap-shots of their environment, were welcomely conspicuous by their absence from its pages.

The drama received its meed of competent recognition without the enshrining of the actor, the author, or the "amiable and genial" gentleman on the mat with an oasis of diamond in a Sahara of white shirt front.

Sport was dealt with in its columns by sportsmen, horses were written about by men who rode them, its Society small talk created plenty more small talk in boudoir-land and the clubs, and the incessant repetition of the question, "Who could have told them?" "How did they find it out?"

Indeed, so pertinent, without being impertinent, were some of its whispers from clubs, drawing-rooms, even from palace corridors, that in theatre foyers, the opera crush-room, beneath the trees of Rotten Row, at Hurlingham, Sandown, Gatwick, in the Ascot inclosure and on Goodwood's lawn, people hushed their voices and thought twice before speaking, lest a *Meteor* man—or woman, might be within hearing or addressing them.

But to the general reader who bought the *Meteor* neither for its advice to investors, nor for those racing tips so deadly sure that the *Meteor's* selected was the despair of the ring, and went to odds-on at once, perhaps the most delightful features of the production were the quaint and dainty verses and the strong and extraordinary stories signed: "Harvey Bligh."

Nothing quite like them had been known. Bizarre, varied this week in bantering vein, a feather of a story, the next a lurid, hot, and fierce encounter of the brain of writer and reader, such a story as one laid down wondering many things, thinking many things, perhaps for the first time, feeling that the tale was stranger than ever because, strange to say, it was so true.

Or again, a sudden white light on some dark corner of the life lived around us at our doors, at our feet, ignored by a social system with one all and only object, aim, and end; its own amusement, but some dread day to come to be ignored no longer.

People began to ask each other, who was Harvey Bligh? Had you ever met him? What manner of man was he? He could not be so very young to know so much, nor yet so very old to wield a pen so dainty and light-hearted, and editors and publishers began to ask the self-same question.

By-and-bye at the *Meteor* Office Harvey Bligh, Esq., found letters, even telegrams, awaiting him, not a few from far-off lands, from Australia, herself a promising nursery of fiction weavers, and notably from Boston and New York, ever swifter and keener to recognise and raise good men and new.

So that ere long his name was a familiar one to the readers of the best of the magazines and periodicals; his work had caught the public fancy, which means in every walk of life a fortune, and commissions rained upon him thick and fast.

So also social recognition, and had he been that way inclined, the young poet-author's days, and much of his nights, might have been devoted to dinner-parties, At Homes, and clubs, and Society would once more have killed its latest lion.

But Harvey Bligh, to Society's surprise, shrank and withdrew himself from that celebrity for which others would have given their ears.

He still made Mrs. Skimper's establishment his home, but, greatly to that lady's regret and to the despair of Arethusa,

Sampson Scrimshaw, Esq., was duly returned M.P. for Brixwell in the Pro-Con. interest, and that one of his sponsors on his introduction to the Speaker was the

although remaining a paying, he ceased to be a resident guest, save occasionally, betaking himself instead with his work now to a cottage on the Northumbrian cliffs, now to some bungalow on the Devon coast, now and then for a spell inhaling the heather-fragrant air of Hindhead, and now and then drifting by easy stages from one to the other of the hotels and inns beside the Thames, 'twixt Wallingford and Hampton Court.

It was thus that the successful new writer was enabled to not only devote himself to his work, but to conceal the identity of Harvey Bligh with Ronald Geldart, the unjustly banned. Naturally now and then he would on the river or some seaside pier happen with some associate of earlier days, not a few of whom either not having heard or utterly disregarding the stigma of suspicion resting on his name, met him with cordial greetings.

None of these suspected that they were face to face with the man whose work had so suddenly and decisively made its mark.

And Ronald had the satisfaction and amusement of at times hearing his work, its merits and demerits, discussed at the *table d'hôte* of the pleasure steamer, in the train, and sometimes being naively asked his opinion regarding himself, or, rather, regarding his other self.

It was during one of these pleasant spells that the young writer, idly sculling along a pleasant timber-shaded reach that might have been the lake of some Castle of Indolence, so languorously the drowsy bees and shimmering gay dragonflies buzzed and hummed round the cups of fox-gloves and water-lilies, when all of a sudden he raised his eyes to watch a supple, willowy form that passed him wielding a punt-pole with the grace of a water nymph.

The graceful form of the English river girl, surely of all girls the sweetest, breeziest, and most adorable, with her dainty piqué skirt, her serviceable blouse, her natty sailor hat, its ribbon matching her sailor knot tie in the colours, of her or his club, or perhaps his college.

Such a picture, charming as it is, happily along the Thames is to be met with so frequently, that Harvey Bligh would doubtless, when a few strokes past that punt, have resumed the weaving of a serial story plot then in his mind, but that, almost unconsciously, he raised his eyes to the oval, sun-tinged face beneath that dainty sailor hat.

Just at that moment a pair of grave, grey eyes met and riveted his glance. Her eyes, the eyes that for so long had haunted his nights and days, the eyes that he had first beheld fixed, terror dilated, on the frantic carriage horses, stampeding, so it had seemed, to their own and her destruction, the eyes that he had last beheld awaking from his coma of exhaustion following her rescue, fixed on his face with tender gratitude.

And as he now with indrawn breath met their glance there gleamed in them the light—yes! his heart beat to note it—the glad light of recognition, and the summer noon-day breeze carried to his ears the whisper of a little involuntary half-sigh, half-cry.

Instinctively he doffed his boating cap. The weigh was on her trim, gay-cushioned craft, the impetuous, officious tide and his own strong, sweeping strokes had borne him well away from her.

Once again they had met, just for a moment, once again were drifting apart, perhaps for ever. For the envious river bearing him so swiftly from her was winding round, and ere he had time to think or to decide should he speak to her, wait for her to drift back to him or turn his boat and scull up stream in her wake, breaking and scattering to the winds all conventionality, all the etiquette and the unwritten laws of Society, the river's bend had blotted from that summer idyll picture her nymph-like form. She was gone, it was too late—perhaps it was all for the best.

He sculled on, grinding his teeth with vexation. Then of a sudden he ceased, startled by a cry, a cry from around that bend up-stream.

(Another long instalment of this story will appear next week.)

MYSTERIES OF THE EAR.

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Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette.

All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.]

Troubles of a Cousin.

"I HAVE been staying in the country," writes "ALBERT," "where I have met a very pretty girl cousin, lately grown up. Naturally, I have rather sought her society. However, every time I have tried to get a walk or quiet chat with her about half a dozen of the younger members of the family have appeared on the scene and quite monopolised the young lady's attention. The result is that I have not even exchanged a private word with her. Is this not hard, and how can I remedy it?"

As you are cousins, I suppose you would not be going too far in asking the girl if she will not take a walk with you alone. It is not as though you were strangers. If she really wants to do so she will very soon dispose of her troublesome brothers and sisters. To chat privately with one's cousin is quite an accepted diversion with most girls, and I don't think there is much harm in it.

The Seaside Flirt Again.

"I AM another victim of the seaside flirt," writes "F. J. I.," "and would like your opinion, even if you cannot advise me on the matter. I stayed recently at a boarding-house on the Kent coast, where I met a very charming girl. I had scarcely been there a day or two when we began to strike up something more than a mere acquaintanceship. We took walks together, sat next to each other, and in time grew very much like lovers. I really began to feel that I liked the girl very much, and when we parted we had arranged to correspond, and to see each other on our return to town.

"A week or so elapsed, and I wrote to her at her London address, asking permission to call. To my surprise, I received in reply a curt note, saying that the girl thought we had better not continue the relationship, and hoping that I would regard this note as final. I was much hurt at this treatment. Will you please advise me, or give me your opinion on her conduct, as I think it has been very wrong."

I think the girl has acted in a very regrettable way. No doubt, like only too many others, she has allowed herself to go beyond discretion while at the seaside, and as a result has led a young man to go further than he otherwise would. Frequently, as has often been pointed out, one's ideas do relax a little at the seaside, but that is no reason why one should deliberately play with other people's affections.

"F. J. I." had better write to her expressing his view of her conduct in polite and even friendly language. If he does it delicately, the way may be still left open for a revival of the seaside friendship. "F. J. I." should also try in future to avoid falling too deeply into the meshes of the seaside flirt. What may be a romance on the seashore by moonlight often proves a very transparent deception in the cold light of working-day.

Calling in the Country.

"WHEN paying an afternoon call in the country," writes "MAX," "should I attire myself in any particular garb? For instance, would it be bad form to go in a flannel or cycling suit?"

Etiquette slackens a good deal in the country. A man is not supposed to have dressed himself for the occasion on paying a call, but to be wearing just his ordinary clothes. At smart country houses it is quite often that one sees men in riding costume or flannels. The man who has carefully dressed himself for the occasion may very often find himself conspicuous, as one of the charms of the country is freedom from town manners and costumes.

The Nervous Admirer.

"I AM considered a very pretty girl," writes "ADA," "and have a good many admirers. For many months I have been meeting a gentleman in the streets, and he has looked at me in a very meaning way whenever we have met. The other day I saw him with a lady friend of mine, and on meeting her afterwards she said, 'Mr. Brown is simply dying to be introduced to you. Would you mind?' I said I should be very pleased to meet Mr. Brown, and we got to know each other.

"My point is this. We have now been acquainted for over a month, and he has seen me very often. During that time however, he has not breathed one word which I might take as proving him to be in love. We have just chatted as ordinary friends, and he has not even squeezed my hand. What is your opinion? Do you think he wanted to know me because he felt he could love me, or was it mere curiosity?"

You must give him at least another month, "ADA," before coming to any conclusion. Perhaps the man is too shy to make a clean breast of his feelings, and perhaps you have not given him enough encouragement to make a start. He may be simply boiling over with admiration for you, and yet too nervous to reveal the fact. If he is really in love with you he will take an opportunity of showing it sooner or later. I have known affairs of the kind you mention in which the man has met the girl for over a year, yet has never dared to speak of his love.

The Other Fellow's Girl.

MORE seaside troubles, this time of a more complicated order. "BERTIE" was staying at a friend's house at the seaside, where was also a young man and his fiancée. "BERTIE" knew the young man fairly well, and had no idea whatever of flirting with the girl. However, before he had been there long this young lady started making violent love to him. She sought him out alone, always tried to sit next to him, said sweet nothings, and generally suggested that she preferred his society to that of her fiancée. Meanwhile the young man seemed scarcely to notice his sweetheart's breach of faith, and treated "BERTIE" in the most friendly fashion. How should "BERTIE" act? He felt that he was himself beginning to fall in love with his friend's girl.

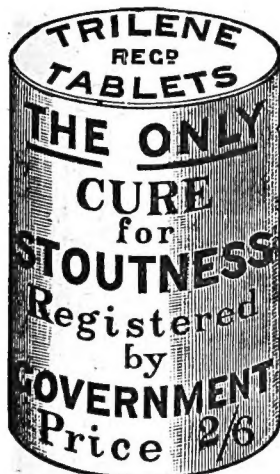
"BERTIE" had better cut the affair short at once. He is playing with fire. I know that kind of girl. No doubt she has taken a passing fancy to "BERTIE," and, with the usual seaside influence has allowed herself to show it, whereas otherwise she would have kept it to herself. I do not suppose she really cares more for "BERTIE" than for her fiancée, but perhaps it has struck her as a good joke to play one off against the other—a favourite habit with girls. Let "BERTIE" get out of all communication with the girl at once, before any serious result happens.

Cynthia

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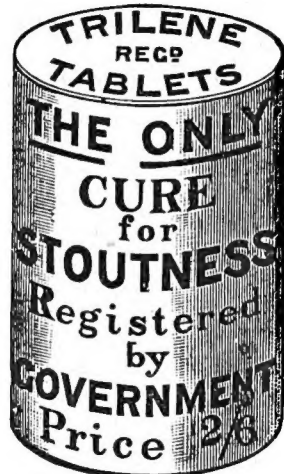
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SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"St Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.
Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.
Yours faithfully, J. R. GANHAM."

COUNTESS BROCKENBURY, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says "I weighed 12st. 5lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 5lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

MISS NORTLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

Mr. W. M. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 2nd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigton, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 10st. 11lb."

Mr. McLEOD, 44 Calista, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 5lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENSWALD, of Lidarp, Sweden, writes, 2th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure."

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 1st. 5lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mr. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Redol, Bagillt, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1896: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 5lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 23 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Banwell, "Reduced from 12st. to 9½st. and do not get any heavier."

Col. SERP. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says "A man in my regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. BOLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done world of good—reduced 10lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 33 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 12st. 5lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady O. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Miss JANE CARTER, of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest value. I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS. BLAKELY, of 27 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 45lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case causes much local interest."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

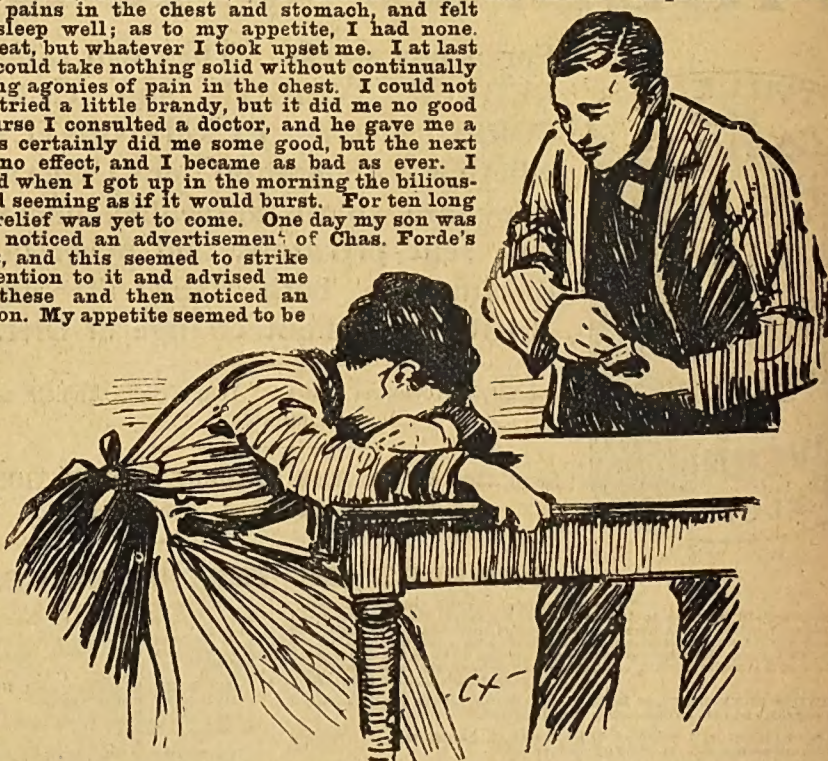
Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Thymon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

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"**A** BOUT TEN YEARS AGO I FIRST BEGAN TO SUFFER from attacks of Biliousness, which, in spite of treatment, seemed to grow worse and worse," said Mrs. Elizabeth Vowles, Chew Lane, Chew, Stoke, near Bristol, to a "Bristol Times and Mirror" Reporter. "I first had a bad headache, then pains in the chest and stomach, and felt ill all over. I could not sleep well; as to my appetite, I had none. Of course I was bound to eat, but whatever I took upset me. I at last got in such a state that I could take nothing solid without continually vomiting, and then suffering agonies of pain in the chest. I could not even take cold water, so I tried a little brandy, but it did me no good and made me sick. Of course I consulted a doctor, and he gave me a bottle of medicine, and this certainly did me some good, but the next lot I had seemed to have no effect, and I became as bad as ever. I could do no housework, and when I got up in the morning the biliousness was dreadful, my head seeming as if it would burst. For ten long years I suffered thus, but relief was yet to come. One day my son was reading a paper, when he noticed an advertisement of Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness, and this seemed to strike him, for he called my attention to it and advised me to get a sample. I took these and then noticed an improvement in my condition. My appetite seemed to be returning, and, what was more, the food which I took my stomach retained. I continued the course, carefully following the directions, and after taking four boxes I was surprised to find myself well. Being able to digest my food, I gained strength, the sickness and headaches abated, and I was able to get about my work with ease and comfort. My health now compares quite favourably with that I experienced in the past, and I attribute this solely to Bile Beans, which I can and do conscientiously recommend to all who suffer as I have done."



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